THE DECISIVE TREATISE ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS LAW AND PHILOSOPHY

[KITĀB FAṢL AL-MAQĀL]

The translation has been made from the critical text established and edited by M. ʿAmāra, *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī-mā bayna al-Ḥikma wa al-Šarīʿa min al-Ittiṣāl*, Dār al-Maʿārif, Cairo 1972.

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, WHO GIVES MERCY! PRAISE BE TO GOD, LORD OF THE WORLDS! GOD'S PEACE AND BLESSING BE ON OUR LORD MUḤAMMAD AND ON ALL HIS COMPANIONS AND MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY.

The noblest and most excellent jurist, the fair judge, the very first among the learned Abū 'l-Walīd Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rušd—may God be satisfied with him and have mercy of him—says: Extolled be God with all the possible praises and be a prayer lifted for Muḥammad, His chosen and immaculate servant and messenger!

Then: the purpose of this writing is to investigate, from the point of view of religious Law, whether philosophical speculation and logical sciences are licit according to the *šarʿ*[1] or prohibited or

[1] *Šarʿ* or *šarīʿa* is indeed the "religious Law". In Averroes' text, the term assumes different shades of meaning, therefore I translated it sometimes (confirmed by Hourani 1976, but the version is now widely accepted) also with "religion" or "Scripture". This is justified by the fact that in the Semitic world, Arabic or Jewish in the same way, religion has more legalistic-juridical significance than gnostic-metaphysical, therefore "Law"

mandatory, both because they are commendable and because they are necessary.

I

And so we say: every philosophical activity is nothing but speculation upon existing beings,[2] and reflection upon how, through the consideration that they have been created, one manages to demonstrate the Creator:[3] indeed, existing beings show to have a producer through the knowledge of having been produced.

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and "religion" are factually often interchangeable.

[2] In this definition, Averroes seems to include both beings that have a separate existence (which, according to Aristotle, are dealt with by the "first philosophy" or "metaphysics"), and beings that exist in our real world (which are dealt with by the "second philosophy" or "physics"). The definition, after all, confirms the Averroistic realism that was stressed in the "Introduction" (cf. *supra*, p. 35–36). "What is dealt with by Ibn Rushd" Cruz Hernandez (1985, II, 55) writes "is what things are here and now… The actual entities have an inherent necessity to their tangible real existence. It is this that the philosopher should be interested in… From here derives that sort of mental allergy of Ibn Rushd for the famous distinctions codified by Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] between "being merely possible *for itself* and necessary for other" and "being always and absolutely necessary *for itself*".

[3] Literally: "factor", "producer", "builder"; Arabic: *ṣāniʿ*. The proof of the existence of a creator God starting from the existence of the creatures, that is of a First Cause starting with the derived effects, is a philosophical *topos* so well-known that it is not even worth to dwell on it. Instead, it is interesting to note how it is shared by Islamic thinkers, who are certainly not truly Aristotelian or rigorously philosophers. For example, the Neoplatonist (and gnostic) Ibn Ṭufayl: "The existence of the whole world was therefore only the one that came from its inclination to move by this Motor that is exempt from matter… Since the matter of everybody needed the form… the existence of the form did not occur but by the work of this Author… Everything that existed needed an Author" (Ibn Ṭufayl 1983, pp. 105–107). But also the theologian and spiritual crypto-philosopher al-Ḡazālī, who, however, claimed a very strong philosophical base: "We affirm for principles of reasoning that every new thing, in order to be, must have a cause that produces it. The world is a new thing. Therefore, in order to be, it cannot but have a cause" (al-Ḡazālī 1985, vol. I, p. 99; tr. in al-Ḡazālī 1970a, p. 162).

Such knowledge concerning the production of things is more complete the more it allows a complete knowledge of Him who produced them. Religious Law authorises, indeed stimulates, the reflection upon what exists, so it is evident that the activity named (philosophy) is considered necessary by religious Law or, at least, it is recommended by it.

That religious Law calls to an intellectual inquiry on the existing beings and requires one (to attain) knowledge on them, it is clear from several verses of the Blessed and Exalted God's Book,[4] among which, for instance, the following: "Reflect, O you who have eyes to see!" (Q. 59:2). This verse certifies the necessity of using intellectual reasoning, or rather, simultaneously, of intellectual reasoning and juridical-legal reasoning. The Most High also says: "Haven't they studied the realms of the heavens and earth and all the things created by God?" (Q. 7:185). This verse clearly induces speculation on existing beings as a whole. God the Most High has taught that among those who have been granted the honour of possessing science there is Abraham, in particular,—be unto him peace!—and indeed God said: "And so we showed Abraham the realms of the heavens and the earth, so that he be among those who are firmly convinced" (Q. 6:75). The Most High also stated: "Don't men then look at the camel, how it was created, and the sky, how it was lifted?" (Q. 88:17–18); and again: "Who… meditate upon the creation of the heavens and the earth" (Q. 3:191). And there exist innumerable other verses similar to these.

Having established that religious Law makes speculation and rational inquiry on existing beings mandatory, and since such inquiry consists of nothing but the deduction and derivation of the unknown from what is already known—and this is what has been called syllogism, or what you can get at by means of a syllogism—, it is also mandatory that we turn to the study of existing reality by means of rational reasoning.[5] It is further evident that this type of

[4] The Qur'ānic quotes are usually my own confronted with those of Ida Zilio Grandi in Italian (*Il Corano*, Mondadori, Milano 2010) and the English ones of Abdel Haleem and Arberry.

[5] Arabic: *qiyās* (*ʿaql*). As the previous *šarʿ*, also this word assumes in Averroes' text different shades of meaning: a) reasoning in general; b) syl-

analysis religious Law calls to and incites is the most perfect kind of study linked with the most perfect kind of reasoning, that is what is called "[apodictic] demonstration".[6]

Since the Law leads to the knowledge of God Most High and of all existing creatures by means of demonstration, the best and absolutely most binding thing for anybody wanting to know the Blessed and Exalted God and the other existing beings though demonstration, is in the first place to make progress in the knowledge of the various sorts of demonstrations and their conditions, and then to know the difference between demonstrative, dialectic, rhetoric and erroneous reasoning. Yet this is not possible if first one does not know what reasoning is in a general sense, and how many types it is made up of, and what really is reasoning and what is not. And this in turn is not possible if first one does not know which are the parts making up reasoning—and especially the prerequisites and their distinctions. In conclusion: it is binding, for those who believe in religion and conform to it, choosing to speculate on the existing beings, that, before speculating, they get to know those things which, in connection with thought, perform the same function of the tools in connection with a practical activity.

Just as the jurist, from God's command to work out a study on the *fiqh*, deduces the necessity of juridical knowledge and its varieties, and that of the determination of what is actually reasoning and what is not; just so is it mandatory for the learned, always complying with the (divine) command to speculate into existing beings, to deduce the necessity of rational knowledge and its varieties. Rather, the learned is even more bound to it since, if the jurist must deduce from God's word: "reflect, O you who have eyes to see!"

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logism; c) analogical deduction of a juridical kind. See Hourani 1976, p. 85, note 22; and for the various uses of the term also Abdou 1973, *sub indice*.

[6] Arabic: *burhān*. Averroes distinguishes different kinds of demonstration (see Abdou 1973), mostly from direct Aristotelian derivation, like the demonstration *quia* (= why) and the one *propter quid* (= caused by what); to those are added "the demonstration that changes in relation to the position of its terms " (cf. Abdou 1973, p. 501), and, naturally, the "rhetoric" demonstration (*ḫiṭābi*), the most appropriate to be understood by the common populace.

the necessity of rational juridical knowledge, how much more must the learned who wants to know God do so by rational intellectual knowledge!

And it makes no sense for somebody to object that the study carried out, according to rational reasoning, is an innovation to be blamed[7] because there is no trace of it with the ancients,[8] because juridical reasoning and its varieties were also born well after the time of the first Muslims, yet nobody considers them an innovation to be blamed! Therefore, it is necessary to reach the very same solution for rational reasoning—and the cause thereof is not to be mentioned here (once again). Moreover, the majority of the followers of our religion is well convinced (of accepting) rational reasoning, except a small sect of rough anthropomorphists,[9] against whom it is possible to argue employing the Holy Texts.

Having then established that, according to religious Law, it is necessary to engage in the study of rational reasoning and its varieties, just as in the juridical sphere, it is evident that, if any of our predecessors did not deal with that reasoning, it is our duty to start. The successor must, to this end, ask for the help of those preceding him, so as to make his own knowledge more perfect. Now,

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[7] Arabic: *biḍʿa*. It is a technical term that indicates, usually, a doctrinal deviation compared to what is considered "orthodox", or at least agreed on by the majority.

[8] Arabic: "the first ones" *(al-awwal)*. It means the very first companions and followers of the Prophet that, in the Muslim point of view, would have constituted the perfect society, and that represent the most veracious oral source of traditions *(ḥadīṯ*, plural *aḥādīṯ)* of the behaviour *(sunna)* of Muḥammad. Obviously, the *sunna* of the Prophet should be binding for the ethical and social conduct of every authentic believer.

[9] Arabic: *ḥašwiyya*. They do not constitute a well and truly theological "school", but they call themselves thus, those jurists or theologians who, starting from a rigorously literal interpretation of the Qurʾān, state that God has a body and that He is gifted with hands, eyes, etc., just like a man. Laoust 1983a, pp. 307–308, mentions among the main *ḥašwiyya* Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī (i.e. the "literalist"), in the critique of the Shiite theologian al-Ḥillī. Many exponents of the Ḥanbalite school of Law and theology have had strong anthropomorphic tendencies, exceeding the average of a religion that, like all monotheistic ones, has anthropomorphic inclinations.

since it is difficult or even impossible that anybody should manage, autonomously and from the beginning, to learn all that is necessary to him concerning a certain topic, and it being difficult that he will manage to do so concerning the knowledge of the varieties of juridical reasoning, how much truer will that be for rational knowledge!

Hence, if somebody has already engaged in investigating rational reasoning, it is obvious that it is our duty, insofar as we are walking in their footsteps,[10] to refer to what our predecessors have already stated, be it somebody professing our own religion or not. Actually, if, when performing a sacrifice, we use a suitable tool, it is absolutely of no importance for the validity of the sacrifice whether this tool belongs to somebody professing our same religion or not. The essential point is that the conditions of performing the ceremony are correct.[11]It is clear that by "those not professing our reli-

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[10] The text has: *nastaʿīn(a) ʿalā mā naḥnu bi-sabīlihi bi-mā qālahu man taqaddamanā*. Hourani 1976, p. 46 translates: "to seek help towards our goal from what has been said by such a predecessor". Butterworth in Averroes 2001: "to rely on what the one who has preceded us says about what we are pursuing". Alonso 1947, p. 154: "debemos servirnos, como de ayuda para nuestros estudios filosóficos, de los investigaciones realizadas por todos los que nos han precedido en la labor". Geoffroy in Averroes 1996: "Si d'autres que nous ont déjà procédé à quelque recherche en cette matière, il est evident que nous avons l'obligation, pour ce vers quoi nous nous acheminons, de recourir à ce qu'en ont dit ceux qui nous ont précédés". As Martinez Lorca 1990, p. 64 notes: "According to the proper genetic method [of Averroes], human culture and particularly philosophy are a slow and progressive conquest, obtained not by a man only but by humanity as a whole; one cannot progress in the scientific field without a prior knowledge of the previous contributions".

[11] Arabic: *taḏkiya*, controversial term, for which see Hourani 1959, note B, p. 16, that contests Gauthier's interpretation (ed. of *Faṣl* 1942, reprinted 1958) that reads *taẓkiya*, which is "purification". As a matter of fact, ʿAmāra and Hourani's hypothesis is more significant in this context. Alonso 1947, p. 154: "el instrumento de que nos servimos para salir del error". Geoffroy: "critères de conformité". Butterworth in Averroes 2001: "no consideration is given, with respect to the validity of the sacrifice, as to whether the tool belongs to someone who shares in our religion or not".

gion", I mean the ancients (who engaged in speculative issues) before Islam's religion.[12]

If the question is put in these terms, and if all we need for the study of rational reasoning has already been carefully investigated and in the best way by the ancient (philosophers), it is appropriate that we eagerly take their books in our hands and examine their opinions in depth. And if all this is true, we shall accept it from them; but if something seems false, we shall notice it.

Once we have accomplished this examination and have mastered methods by which we shall get rightful consideration of existing beings and determine that they have been produced—for who does not know the production, shall not know the product, and who does not know the product, does not know the producer—, then it will be necessary to address the analysis of existing beings according to that order and that arrangement we will have inferred from the knowledge obtained by means of demonstrative reasoning.

It is furthermore clear that the end we are pursuing (by the study) of existing beings is pursuable by a progress in successive stages of the inquiry, and that the successor must ensure, to this purpose, his predecessors' help, just as it happens in mathematical sciences. Let's suppose, for example, that the art of geometry does not exist nowadays, nor astronomy; if a man wanted to calculate on his own the measure of celestial bodies, and their shape and their form and their mutual distances, that would be impossible for him. So, for instance, he would not be able to know, even if he were by nature the wisest of men, the proportions of the Earth or the Sun or other things relating to the measurement of stars, if revelation or something similar did not come and assist. Thus, if somebody told him that the Sun is greater than the Earth by 150 or 160 times, he would think the supporter of such a thesis to be mad, while the demonstration carried out according to astronomic science confirms the hypothesis in such a manner that not even an astronomer could absolutely doubt it.[13]

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[12] That is, essentially, the Greek philosophers.

[13] Averroes repeats the example in the *Incoherence of the incoherence* (Averroes 1930, pp. 207–208; tr. Averroes 1997, p. 235): "The common

A binding analogy exists between the mathematical sciences and that of the principles of Law. Indeed, the expertise in Law becomes perfect only after a very long time. And if, nowadays, somebody should wish to autonomously gather all evidence that the diverse (juridical) schools have formulated upon controversial issues—issues upon which the dispute is open in the majority of Islamic countries, except the Maghreb[14]—, he would risk being laughed at, because the enterprise would be prohibitive, on the grounds of the exhaustive handling that has already been performed thereof. This self-evident truth concerns not only the theoretical disciplines, but also the practical ones, since, also for them, there is none that anyone might claim to establish on his own part from the beginning.

And so how will matters look for the supreme discipline, philosophy?[15] If all this (that has been said up to now) is true, it is nec-

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man… if he were told that the Sun is about 170 times bigger than the Earth, would think that it is an absurdity… The only way to draw on a similar knowledge is demonstration… If this happens in geometrical or mathematical questions, namely that, when a conclusion is explained to a common man, it appears fallacious to him…, how much more will that happen in case of metaphysical sciences, since this kind of knowledge is not based on plausible assumptions that satisfy the understanding of the populace".

[14] Hourani 1976, note 44, p. 89, points out that "The art "of the principles of the Law" (*ṣināʿa uṣūl al-fiqh*) had been neglected there [in al-Andalus, that is in Spain] before the Almohad movement; the Malikite school had concentrated on applied Law (*ʿilm al-furūʿ*)".

[15] As mentioned in the Introduction, Averroes uses here the term *ḥikma*, more generic than *falsafa*, that indicates properly the philosophy of Greek origin, but with a more Islamic connotation. Avicenna uses *ḥikma* to mean also the complete knowledge that God has of the causes of things, or the perfection reached by the human soul that devotes itself to speculative truths. A. Martin's note (in Averroes 1984, p. 35, note 37) is, in this regard, commendable stressing that *ḥikma* means first of all *wisdom*. It is an Arabic Qur'ānic word (for example, Q. 16:125). In Averroes, the two terms appear coordinated, which means that he considers them as interchangeable. In the *Decisive Treatise*, the two words alternate each other, although it is *ḥikma* rather than *falsafa* which expresses the notion of *philosophy*. It is true that in the *Treatise*, whose purpose is to legitimise the study

essary for us (philosophers) that, should we find with our predecessors, no matter how ancient a people they belonged to, someone who has already looked into the analysis and the examination of existing reality applying the provided rules for demonstration, we would engage in studying the statements contained in their books. And what they have said which conforms to truth, we shall accept joyfully and shall be thankful for; while that which they have said diverging from truth, we shall highlight and mistrust, though forgiving them for the mistake they made.

Hence it is clear that the study of the books of the ancients is mandatory by Law, because their purpose and their intention are the same ones as to that which the Law incites us. Those prohibiting anyone who would have the capability thereto, that is, someone possessing natural intelligence jointly with religious integrity and virtuous or scientific and moral straightforwardness, to engage therewith, would bar the way through which the Law calls men onto the knowledge of God. And because it is the door of theoretical study, the only one leading to an authentic penetration of divine truth, this kind of prohibition represents an act of ignorance and alienation from the Most High.

Therefore, it is not at all licit to anyone erring or failing in the enterprise of philosophical study, be it for lack of ability or for logical indiscipline or for excess of passions or for not having found a teacher able to educate and inform him or for all these reasons put together—, it is not licit to him, as we were saying, to forbid anyone else who is capable to do so to engage in what he has failed to accomplish.

Indeed, such a failure (in philosophical study) is accidental with reference to its causes, and not substantial; so, that there is no reason for which what is useful by its nature and worth should be neglected because of some features present in it by accident. Therefore, when a man, whose brother's diarrhoea the Prophet had ad-

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of the sciences and of philosophical speculation in the eyes of orthodoxy, Averroes makes an effort to use the term *falsafa* as little as possible. From this, the fallback on *ḥikma*, word derived from the Qur'ān. This clearly allows the author to find in the Holy Book a justification for philosophical research.

vised to cure with honey had complained that, on the contrary, the diarrhoea had increased after the honey had been consumed, the Prophet—may peace be unto him!—answered: "God is right! It is your brother's womb who is lying".[16]

So, we are saying that anyone prohibiting those with the faculty thereof to study the philosophers' books with the excuse that there have been despicable men who diverted from the right path precisely because of that study, is similar to him who prevents a thirsty man from drinking fresh water, until he dies, with the excuse that he might be suffocated by it. Indeed, to die because water has been swallowed badly is accidental, while to die of thirst is according to substance and necessity.

What appears accidental in this discipline (philosophy) is just as accidental in all other disciplines. How many jurists have been led by Law to doubt (faith) and to be tangled in worldly business! As a matter of fact, most jurists are now in these regrettable (moral) conditions, although the object of their study requires, by election, the ethical practice of virtue. Therefore, it is not unlikely that in a discipline implying ethical virtue, that what happens by accident in a discipline implying theoretical virtue may also accidentally happen.

Having established all this, and being convinced, as Muslims, that our divine religion is true, and that it incites us to pursue that greatest happiness that consists of the knowledge of God the Powerful and Exalted and of his creatures, it can be derived that for every Muslim, according to his temper and his nature, a particular kind of consent[17] to these truths is provided. Indeed, men's personalities differ qualitatively as far as this consent is concerned, being there those giving it to rational demonstration, those giving it to

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[16] That is: in itself, in essence, honey is good for diarrhoea; if it is not beneficial to your brother, it is because, by chance, his organism does not tolerate it.

[17] Arabic: *taṣdiq*. It is one of the key terms of the *Decisive Treatise*. It indicates the obligation that every man has to adhere to truth, everyone proportionately to their own ability (cf. Campanini 1989, p. 22). *Taṣdiq* indicates, however, also the "judgment", that is, literally, the ability to judge according to truth (and therefore to bring "assent" to it).

dialectic disputes with the same intensity of those believing in demonstrations—and this because their nature does not allow them otherwise—, and those giving it to rhetorical discourse, also with the same intensity as those believing in demonstrations.

Thus, since our divine religion calls men to itself according to these three ways, the given consent is generalised, and only those are excluded who obstinately demand to fight it with words or those who, out of their own negligence, refuse to welcome the most suitable way leading to God. The Prophet—peace be unto him!—was sent with a particular message "to the white and to the black", thanks to the fact that religion includes all possible ways to get closer to God. And the Most High made this very clear, saying:

> "Call men to God's path, with wise and good warnings, and discuss with them in the best way" (Q. 16:125).[18]

Now, since our religion is true and incites to a speculative activity culminating in God's knowledge, we Muslims may not but be firmly convinced that demonstrative speculation cannot lead to any different conclusions from those revealed by religion, because the True cannot contrast with the True, on the contrary it conforms to it and bears witness to it.

Being it so, if demonstrative speculation leads to the knowledge of any real being, the prerequisite is inescapable that that real being is either mentioned or omitted in the Scriptures. If it is omitted, there is no contradiction (between religion and philosophy), because that case would be identical to the jurist who, not finding some legal principle in the Scriptures, must deduce it by analogy. If, on the contrary, religious texts mention them, one of the two occurs: either the apparent sense of the philosophical conclusion agrees with or it contrasts with those texts. If it agrees, there is no problem. Yet if it contrasts, the necessity of an allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures[19] arises. Allegorical interpreta-

[18] The "wise warnings" are those addressed to the philosophers; the "good warnings" are the rhetorical advices addressed to the populace; the "discussion" is clearly the dialectics proper to theologians.

[19] Averroes goes here to the very heart of the speculative problem that he raised: the Scriptures speak to every man; but their meanings are

not perspicuous and the difficult or ambiguous expressions (those that the Qur'ān calls *mutašābihāt*, Q. 3:7, and that Zilio Grandi translates with "allegorical verses" while Abdel Haleem with "ambiguous", a rendering I more agree with) can be understood only by the philosophers. The potential danger of the assumption of Averroes in the eyes of the traditionalists consists in the fact that philosophical understanding implies, indeed, overstepping the literal meaning of the holy text in a hermeneutic, metaphoric or allegorical or strictly theoretical way. An enemy of the Cordovan thinker could easily object to him that interpreting the Scriptures hermeneutically could mean misinterpreting the word of God itself, or distort it, with the risk of falling into heresy. Averroes might respond that "religious Law gives God the ability to hear and to see in order to remind us that God owns every kind of knowledge and understanding. Now, the masses are not able to understand the meaning of this attribute but in terms of [physically] "hearing" and of "seeing", therefore the allegorical exegesis of the attribute, which cannot be considered as one of the dogmas that the Law forces onto everyone, is reserved only to the wise men" (Averroes 1930, p. 454 and tr. Averroes 1997, p. 423). Averroes overcomes the difficulty recalling the difference between required truths, to whom every man has to give consent indiscriminately, and supererogatory truths, whose knowledge can be reserved to the philosophers only (cf. "Introduction", *supra*, p. 25–26). The loophole, obviously, works only in so far as one admits a rank of approximations to the "truth", that therefore does not result absolute, but relative and proportional to the intellectual ability and to the argumentative techniques of the single individuals.

It is interesting to note how al-Ġazālī (cf. later note 30), whom Averroes attacks so harshly, substantially shares the concern about an indiscriminate dissemination of knowledge. Precisely when commenting the just mentioned Qur'ānic verse Q. 16:125, al-Ġazālī states that "God taught that some men are called to him through wisdom [philosophy], others through the warning [preaching], others through the dispute [dialectics)" (al-Ġazālī 1980b, p. 288. In al-Ġazālī 1970a, pp. 92 ff., many indications can be found on how the unwary men are strayed and misled because of their pertinacity to deal with problems that they do not understand adequately). Bello 1989, p. 58, writes that al-Ġazālī considers duty of the masses following the literal and apparent meaning of the Revelation, while speculative men, theologians, can investigate the meaning of the Revelation according to the prerequisite of the necessity and interpret it based on decisive evidences. al-Ġazālī 's and Averroes' positions, naturally, differ on the demonstrative trust to give to philosophy, which, for the Persian thinker, is not always able to demonstrate what it boldly seeks to

tion means to transport the argumentation from a real to a metaphorical level—without, by this, derogating from Arabic linguistic standards in the use of metaphors—, so as to define something either with a synonym or referring to its cause or its effect or to something else that might be comparable thereto, or finally to all those peculiarities that can be found in the diverse kinds of metaphorical discourse.

If acting in this way is licit to the jurist in most of the topics related to the Law, so much more will it be rightful for he who follows the science of demonstrations! And indeed, the jurist only employs a reasoning that is based upon subjective opinion only, while the learned uses a reasoning based on certainty.[20]

Then we shall state with strength that, if a conclusion we reach through demonstration contrasts with the apparent meaning of Scriptures, it is this very apparent meaning to need interpreta-

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(or at least this is the thesis of the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* or *Incoherence of the philosophers*, although the most modern Ghazalian historiography is inclined to emphasise the philosophical character of the speculation of the Persian thinker; cf. infra again notes n. 30 and 53).

[20] Arabic: *qiyās yaqīnī:* "Certainty" or *yaqīn* is, related to "truth" or *ḥaqq*, another key term of the *Decisive Treatise*. In the logical work *al-Ḍarūrī fi'l-Manṭiq* (*The Necessary in Logic*), Averroes says: "Absolute certainty *(yaqīn ʿalā al-iṭlāq)* consists of thinking the true object *(šayy' ṣādiq)*, that is to say what exists in the mind *(ḏihn)* in the same way as it exists outside itself". It is a definition of certainty coherent with the epistemological realism that we have already highlighted several times in Averroes: thought reflects reality objectively. However, continuing his analysis in the same passage, Averroes adds interesting nuances to the concept of certainty: it also consists "of firmly believing that the existence of the object cannot conflict with what we think of it (*bi-ḫilāf mā iʿtaqadnā fih*); … finally, in behaving, even when we suppose something to be against our belief, so as to deem impossible that which contradicts what we believe in" (cit. in Abdou 1973, pp. 203–204). The certainty becomes, therefore, almost a psychological constraint, to which we cannot back out of. This depends, clearly, on the objective correspondence between the knowledge and the known object, but also from a value of truth completely internal to reasoning and demonstrative inquiry.

tion,[21] according to—be it understood—the rules of Arab linguistic exegesis.[22] This fact is not questioned by any Muslim, nor is it disputed by any believer. In this way, indeed, the certainty of those is increased who engage in and exert exegesis, aiming at connecting the intellect with revealed tradition.

What's more: we claim that of all the expression in the Scriptures whose literal sense contrasts with demonstrative conclusions, if the Holy Text is examined and investigated with patience and care in all its parts, other parallel statements will be found that shall bear witness, precisely with their literal meaning, to the (correctness) of the interpretation, or at least shall get very close thereto.

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[21] The crucial term *ta'wīl* appears here, that etymologically indicates the "going back to the origin" but that it is normally used in the technical language of the Islamic thought to indicate "hermeneutics". Such hermeneutics can be, obviously, of different kinds: grammatical-linguistic, symbolic-allegorical, gnostic-esoteric and naturally rationalistic-philosophical. Averroes uses the term very often and flexibly in the *Treatise*, sometimes alluding precisely to a hermeneutics of the allegorical-symbolic kind that transfigures the literal meaning of the Qur'ānic text to lead to a more intimate meaning, not immediately evident in the letter; sometimes suggesting that the demonstrative inquiry of philosophy is the only one able to understand the meanings placed in a revelation that God wanted to address "to the white and to the black". This flexibility implies considerable difficulties for the translation. I looked for a simplification by limiting myself to translating almost always *ta'wīl* with the pure and simple "interpretation". It goes without saying that the gnostic-esoteric dimension of the interpretation, typical of Shiism and of the *ṣūfi* mystic, is completely alien to the Averroistic mentality, and therefore it must not even be considered. On the other hand, the *ta'wīl* represents, coherently with the contemporary philosophy language, the true and proper "hermeneutics", far from the *tafsīr*, or rather from the traditional commentary based on linguistic, literary style, historic, prosopographic issues, etc, but usually without questioning the literal meaning.

[22] Any kind of interpretation, Averroes says, cannot be but congruent with the grammar rules of the language in which it is expressed, in this case Arabic. It follows that the language places very specific restrictions to the freedom of interpretation, which has to happen, anyway, within a codex understandable by everyone. Another Ẓāhirite presupposition.

For this reason, Muslims know that it is not obligatory to understand all expressions in the Scriptures according to their apparent meaning, nor to force them by means of interpretation. They rather have different opinions concerning which revealed passage it is proper to subject to interpretation and which is not. For instance, the Aš'arite[23] allegorise the verse that states that "God directed himself" (Q. 2:29)[24] or the *ḥadīṯ* of his descent towards the sublunar heaven,[25] whereas the Hanbalites[26] accept them literally.

The cause of the fact that within religion there is an exoteric and an esoteric meaning[27] depends on the diversity of opinions of

[23] Aš'arism has been, perhaps, the most important theological school of Sunni Islam. The progenitor and eponym was Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Aš'arī, who was born in Baṣra in 874 and died around 935. Disciple of a Mu'tazilite, al-Aš'arī has been a defector of his mentor and he drew up a theology in complete opposition to the Mu'tazilite one. The fundamental principles of this theology are: a) the reality of the divine attributes that are separated from the essence of God; b) the denial of the agent capability of man, because the only "agent" is God; c) the admission that the Qur'ān is God's eternal, uncreated and immutable "word"; d) neither does sin mean for man absolute condemnation, nor the good action absolute salvation: damnation or salvation are a sovereign discretion of God, that behaves according to the highest degree of justice, anyway; e) the caliphal bloodline of the Prophet Muḥammad has been corrected according to the order of succession of the first four "well guided" caliphs, who are Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uṯmān and 'Alī. For an overall view see Laoust 1983b *passim*; Gardet-Anawati 1981 *passim*; and Caspar 1987, pp. 174–201, and particularly Gimaret 1990.

[24] The Arabic term is *istiwā'*.

[25] For the meaning of *ḥadīṯ*, cf. the previous note 8. The tradition is gathered in al-Buḫārī, *Saḥīḥ*, XCVIII, 35 (about al-Buḫārī see the following note 34).

[26] Those are Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal's followers, a famous jurist and traditionalist, who died in 855. The Ḥanbalites are particularly rigorist and they sustain the necessity of a strictly literal approach to the holy text. The most famous Ḥanbalite theologian was Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), about him cf. Caspar 1987, pp. 219–222; Laoust 1983b, pp. 266–273 and, *passim*, also Laoust 1983a. The bibliography has now become very lengthy, and it is not necessary to give further technical references here.

[27] The Arabic terms are *ẓāhir*, which is exoteric or apparent, and *bāṭin*

men and on their natural inclination to consent. And the cause of the fact that within the Scriptures there exist passages mutually contradictory as far as their literal sense is concerned, is that in this way the exegetic abilities of scholars well-grounded in science are roused, who may engage in connecting them.

To this purpose does the Most High's warning point to when He says: "He is who has revealed the Book to you: and it contains both solid verses, which are the Book's Mother, and ambiguous verses. Yet those who have a corrupt heart will follow what is ambiguous, eager to bring about schism and to interpret imaginatively, while the true interpretation of those passages is known to no-one but God [and] men of solid science will say: We believe in this Book, it all comes from our Lord".[28]

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or esoteric and hidden. They are words with deep gnostic-metaphysical values, beginning with the fact that the Qur'ān uses them also as attributes of God: "He is the First, He is the Last, He is the Manifest (*ẓāhir*), He is the Hidden (*bāṭin*), He is of all things knowing" (Q. 57:3). The distinction between exoteric and esoteric is particularly significant for the Shiites, who make of it the cornerstone of the obligation to interpret the Qur'ān hermeneutically, but also gnostically. Urvoy 1991, p. 77 writes that for Averroes "the Truth does not contradict the Truth, and therefore it is legitimate to join "what is given by reason and what is given by tradition". For this purpose, Ibn Rushd adopts the distinction, already traced by the mystics, between the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) and the hidden (*bāṭin*),with allegorical interpretation as corollary. This interpretative key remains within the horizon of the Almohad rationalism, and it has the simple purpose to avoid the impieties and the heresies that rise from anthropomorphism".

[28] Q. 3:7. Cf. Hayoun-De Libera 1991, pp. 22–23. I reported the verse in full, which is only mentioned in the text and, as is evident, I offered my own translation adapting it to the context and to the Averroist intention. The verse is one of the most controversial in the Qur'ān, because it gives rise to two possible readings depending on where you put the full stop. The classical Qur'ānic Arabic does not know punctuation marks; therefore, it is possible to read both "… it is not known but by God and by the men of solid science. They will say…"), and to read "… it is not known but by God. The men of solid science will say…" (cf. later p. 91 and 102). As we will see, Averroes obviously prefers the first reading because it seems to suggest that philosophers are able to demonstratively

Let us consider now the following objection: In religious Law, there are propositions that Muslims agree must be maintained according to their literal sense, others which need interpretation, others on which opinions diverge. Now, is it perhaps licit that demonstration leads us to interpret that on which we agree the literal sense to be maintained, or to maintain the literal sense of that which we agree has to be subject to interpretation? To this objection, we shall answer: it is not right if the community's consent[29] was obtained by certain methods; if it was obtained thanks to subjective opinion, then it is right. As a matter of fact, Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī)[30] and Abū'l-Maʿālī (al-Ǧuwaynī)[31] and other authoritative

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understand the allegories and the problems of the revelation in the same way as God does, while the second reading seems more "fideistic", reserving this cognitive ability only to God. This does not alter the fact that the second reading is appropriate to put a brake to interpretation.

[29] Arabic: *iǧmāʿ*. It is a very significant term in Islamic theology (anyone interested in looking into subtleties, refer to Gardet-Anawati 1981, pp. 403–407) and in Islamic political thought (Campanini 2006). It indicates, essentially, the consensus of the doctors of the Law and it is one of the four "foundations" of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*; the other three are: the Qurʾān, the *sunna* of the Prophet and analogic reasoning). Averroes' opinion on the *iǧmāʿ* is summarised by Bello 1989, p. 144, who argues that for Averroes the method thanks to which one can reach the *iǧmāʿ* on the theoretic questions is never sure: consequently, the *iǧmāʿ* itself cannot be sure. It is then possible that the demonstration leads to allegorically interpret what the doctors of the Law have agreed to be able to assume in the apparent sense. Similarly, the demonstration can lead to assume in the literal way what scholars have agreed to interpret allegorically. This happens because, on the theoretical questions, a true *iǧmāʿ* is unattainable. Therefore, in Averroes' point of view, there is no problem that arises concerning a potential breach of the *iǧmāʿ*, because actually it does not exist.

[30] *The imām*, the "proof of Islam" (*ḥuǧǧatu'l-Islām*) Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Ḡazālī, already quoted many times, has probably been the main Islamic thinker of all time. Born in Ṭūs, in Persia, around 1056, friend of the great Seljuk vizier Niẓām al-Mulk, he was a professor of Shāfiʿīte jurisprudence first in the Madrasa Niẓāmiya of Baghdad from 1091 to 1095, and then in the Madrasa Niẓāmiya of Nīšāpūr from 1106 to 1109. He travelled to Syria and Palestine and he did the pilgrimage to Mecca between 1096 and 1098. He died in Ṭūs in 1111.

thinkers claimed that nobody can be accused of unbelief who breaks the community's consent concerning the (need to) an interpretation in issues similar to those we have just evoked.[32]

Indeed, it is possible to demonstrate that the community's consent is not able to offer certain answers concerning speculative problems, whereas it possesses the faculty to do so concerning ethical-practical problems. Therefore it is not possible for it to offer solutions to any question at any time, unless that time has been exactly specified by us; if the global footprint of the learned men who

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His best-known works are *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-Falāsifa*), rebutted by Averroes in the equally famous *Incoherence of incoherence* (*Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*), and the *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (*Iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*), an extraordinary religious, mystical, juridic, but also philosophical encyclopedia that is one of the monuments of the Islamic culture. al-Ḡazālī studied the philosophers passionately and was fascinated by their doctrine. The traces of philosophy in his thought are irrefutable, but it is disputed whether he should be considered a philosopher *tout court*. Certainly, in the *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* he shows himself eager to refute philosophy for fear of the consequences that it might have had on religious orthodoxy. For this reason, Averroes, even in the *Decisive Treatise*, always contests him with reprobation and sometimes even with acrimony, even though, as it was seen, (cf. the note 19), their positions were not always completely contrasting. About the Averroes- al-Ḡazālī dialectics the analysis of Leaman 2002 is still interesting, even though sometimes debatable; cf. Puig Montada 2005 and also Campanini 2004 pp. 121–134.

[31] Abū'l-Maʿālī al-Ǧuwaynī, called the *imām al-Ḥarāmayn* (that is the *imām* of the two mosques, Mecca and Medina), was a famous Aš'arite theologian and master of al-Ḡazālī. He lived in Mecca and in Medina and then for long years in Nīšāpūr, in Persia. He died in 1085. Among his works the *Kitāb al-Šāmil fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* or *Complete Book on the principles of the Religion*, and the *Kitāb al-Iršād* or *Book of the Righteous Guide*.

[32] Averroes refers to the authority of the two prestigious orthodox theologians in order to support his own point of view, which is not entirely orthodox: namely, that some particularly gifted men, philosophers, have the right-duty of interpreting certain passages of the Scriptures, even at the expense of countering the *iǧmāʿ*. As to al-Ḡazālī, he wrote the *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayna al-Islām wa'l-zandaqa* (*Criterion of distinction between Islam and religious deviance*) in order to demonstrate the difficulty or even impossibility of charging a Muslim of unbelief: his care was to avoid internal religious strife.

live at that time is not well-known to us, both in their individuality and in their globality; if, concerning the discussed question, the opinion of each of them has not reached us thanks to a rigorous transmission chain;[33] and if the learned living at that (determined) time, according to us, agree on the fact that there does not exist, in religious Law, an exoteric or apparent sense and an esoteric or hidden one. (In that case), the knowledge of any problem must not be concealed to anyone, because men should share only one interpretation of religion.

It has been handed down that many of the first (Muslims) were persuaded that religious Law would possess an apparent and a hidden meaning, and that the esoteric meaning must not be known by those who do not belong to the number of men of science or are not able to understand it. Al-Buḫārī[34] reports that ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib[35]—God be satisfied with him!—said: "Speak to people about what they know! Or would you refute God and his Messenger?". Other traditions of the same content are known to come from the

[33] The science of the Islamic traditions is based on the principle of the mainly oral transmission (*naql*) of various statements and claims from more ancient authoritative sources. The chain of the transmitters, that can be more or less "weak" depending on the authority of the components, is called *isnād*.

[34] Al-Buḫārī, who died in 870, was, together with Muslim, the most valuable collector and systematiser of the *aḥādīṯ* that refer the opinions and the behaviour of the Prophet Muḥammad. The book written by him is called, meaningfully, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which means "genuine", "veracious". A selection of extracts of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* was published in Italian in Turin, Utet, 1982, with the title *Detti e Fatti del Profeta dell'Islam (Words and deeds of the Prophet of the Islam)*, by V. Vacca, S. Noja and M. Vallaro and later (2014) in Milano by A. Ventura, while in English there is at least the translation by Aftab Ahmad, Lahore 1962, but now the text is easily available also by digital resources.

[35] Cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad, he was the fourth caliph and reigned from 656 to 661. He was murdered in Kufa, in Iraq, and after his death the supreme power passed to the Umayyads's dynasty. ʿAlī and his sons al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn (the latter killed in Kerbalāʾ in 680 by the Umayyad Yazīd I) are the first *imāms* of the Shiites, that is of the theological and political confession that refused the legitimacy of the Umayyad caliphate. Shiites means, indeed, "partisans" (of ʿAlī).

globality of the very first Muslims. How is it possible then to imagine a generalised consent being handed down to us concerning any of the major speculative problems? We very well know that in all epochs men of science were not lacking who claimed that religion is the kind of knowledge whose deepest and most authentic meaning must not be known to the totality of men.

The case of ethical-practical issues is quite different. Here everybody agrees on the (need) for a wide diffusion (of that kind of knowledge) with all men indistinctly; and in order to reach a generalised consent on them, it is in our opinion sufficient that a problem be rooted out under all aspects and that no particular difference of opinions has been passed on to us. Yet if this is enough to obtain the consent upon ethical-practical questions, it is not so at all—let us repeat it—for speculative questions.

One might object: If we must not accuse of unbelief those breaking up the community's consent through interpretation, because, in such cases, there can exist no generalised consent, what then with Islamic philosophers like Abū Naṣr (al-Fārābī)[36] and Ibn Sīnā?[37] Indeed, Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī) charges them with unbelief in his well-known book *The incoherence of the philosophers* referring to

[36] Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, one of the main Islamic philosophers, tried a reconciliation between Plato and Aristotle. He composed a *Catalogue of the Sciences*, an *Agreement between the opinions of the philosophers Aristotle and Plato, the "divine"*, a famous political work, the *Virtuous City* or *al-Madīna al-Faḍila*, and many other political, logical and metaphysical writings. A first introductive global reconstruction in Badawi 1972, 11, pp. 478–575, even if obviously the bibliography about him is today very huge and it does not matter to be quoted here. He died in 950. His political works are translated in Italian in al-Fārābī 2007 and in English in 2001 and 2015.

[37] He is the famous Avicenna, well-known in the Christian medieval world both as a doctor (his *Canon* was studied until the late Renaissance) and as a philosopher (his *Kitab al-Šifa'* or *Book of Healing* is the most famous). He had a troubled life, having been a politician as well as a thinker, and he lived in the Persia that was torn by conflicts between emirs and sultans, dying in 1037 in Isfahān. The bibliography on Avicenna too is huge and it is not the place to indicate it here. I quote again the global reconstruction by Badawi 1972, 11, pp. 595–695, by Cruz Hernandez 1963, 1, pp. 69–112 and by Amos Bertolacci in D'Ancona 2005.

three questions:[38] the world's eternity; the fact that God does not know the particulars—but the Most High is far above all that!—; and the interpretation of the resurrection of the bodies[39] and of the (modes) of future life. Now, we say: It seems however that (al-Ḡazālī's) charge of unbelief must not be understood in an absolute way, since in the book *On Distinction* he himself explains how the charge of unbelief for the breach of the community's consent is only conceivable.[40]

From what we have said, it is clear that it is not possible to obtain a generalised consent on (theological) questions like those just mentioned, since, as was handed down by many of the first Muslims and by others yet, interpretations must not be formulated but for those who are experienced with them, hence well-trained in science. Indeed we want to set a full stop after the Most High's words, "men of solid science…".[41] If the learned didn't apply allegorical interpretation, they would not possess that superior ability to consent which makes it obligatory for them to believe, which is not the case with the uncultivated.

God Himself, then, defines (the learned) as men of faith, meaning by faith precisely that which is reached by means of demonstration and that cannot but follow interpretation. On the contrary, the men not of science who may be thought to be believers are those who do not ground their faith upon demonstration. If there is a kind of faith that God acknowledges to the learned, it is

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[38] Also in the *Deliverer from Error* (al-Ḡazālī1970a, pp. 96–97), al-Ḡazālī claims that the three arguments for which philosophers have to be considered "infidels" are; "a) the bodies will not gather together after resurrection…; b) the Exalted God knows the universals and not the particulars…; c) the universe is pre-existent *ab aeterno*".

[39] In this case, the interpretation is certainly allegorical!

[40] al-Ḡazālī 1980a, p. 165 (chap. IX). In this passage, in fact, Averroes admits that "the issue about the consent is most obscure", because it is subject to several variables, and only if a total unanimity between the authorities exists is it possible to start discussing whether and how a thinker can be accused of unbelief.

[41] It is the reading of the controversial passage Q. 3:7 that was mentioned in the previous note 28, thanks to which Averroes recognises the philosophers an interpretative ability equivalent to God's.

necessary that this be grounded on demonstration; and if it is grounded on demonstration, it can but accompany itself to allegorical interpretation. As a matter of fact, God Most High communicated to us that (ambiguous verses) may be interpreted in such a way as to understand their true meaning; and what is demonstration if not something (relating to) truth? Since this is how things are, it is not likely that, concerning the allegorical interpretations that God has peculiarly reserved to the learned, a truly generalised consent will be achieved. Such a conclusion is immediately evident for every person with a balanced mind.

We see that Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī) was mistaken as far as Aristotelian philosophers were concerned, when he attributed them the statement that the Holiest and Exalted God does not know particulars at all. Actually, philosophers only claim that God Most High knows through a science which is of a totally different sort from ours. Indeed, human science is an effect of the known object and is produced when (the known object) comes into being, while it changes when (the known object) is modified. On the contrary, God's science of existing beings is the very cause of these existing known objects. So that, those trying to make these two kinds of knowledge alike are actually trying to transform two completely different and autonomously well-characterised things into one; and this is a sign of deep ignorance. Indeed, if the term "science" were meant both as derivative knowledge and eternal knowledge, it would imply an absolute semantic homonymy, as it often happens (in the Arabic language) with names possessing a double and opposite meaning: for instance *ǧalāl*, indicating both large and small, or *sarīm*, indicating both light and darkness. Thus, divine and human science cannot be traced back to a single dimension, as the *mutakallimūn* (theologians), our contemporaries, would strongly claim to do. As far as we are concerned, we dedicated a short treatise thereto, as some friends advised us to do.[42]

How can one think that Aristotelian philosophers claim that God—be He praised!—does not know the particulars by eternal science, whereas they think that truthful dreams contain anticipa-

[42] It is the *Ḍamīma* or "Appendix", here translated after the *Decisive Treatise*.

tions of minimum facts that will happen in the future, and this forecasting knowledge comes to man during sleep thanks to the pre-existence of an eternal science that orders all things and embraces them? Philosophers, rather, think that God does not know particulars only, but even universals in a different way from that we (men) know them. Indeed, universals are also known to us as an effect of the nature of reality, while, as far as divine science goes, things go in a completely opposite sense. Demonstration leads us to conclude that divine science transcends attributions such as "universal" or "particular", and there is no reason to dispute this topic, that is, to accuse philosophers of unbelief or not to do so.

As far as the question goes, whether the world is eternal or it has been created,[43] the contradiction existing between Aš'arite the-

[43] Although we already dwelled long on this problem in the "Introduction", it is worth coming back on it, given the extreme interest of the matter. In the *Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Averroes writes: "If the world were eternal and existing in itself… then it would not have an agent (that produced it) at all. However, if "eternal" means what is eternally produced in a way that this production has neither a beginning nor an end, certainly the attribute of the "production" is more correctly applied to that who eternally produces than to that who gives place to a limited production. In this (just stated) respect, the world is produced by God, and the term "production" is more appropriate than the one of "eternity". The philosophers call the world eternal just to hedge against a misunderstanding of the word "production" if it is understood as "something produced out of a state of non-existence, from a pre-existent substrate and in time" (Averroes 1930, p. 162; tr. Averroes 1997, p. 200). Averroes seems here to support without ambiguity that the world, even being God's production, is coeternal with Him (on the creation *ex-nihilo* as not explicitly declared in the Qur'ān, cfr. already Arnaldez 1957a). However, the position of the Cordovan philosopher is more nuanced. Wolfson's comment (1961, p. 377) seems to me to be punctual: "Averroes rejects the idea that the world is coeternal with God in the sense that it is eternally issued by God [but on the fluctuations of the Averroist thought on this topic, see Kogan 1981]. According to him, the world is coeternal with God in the sense that God is eternally its driving force. But this quality of the world, that is to be eternally moved by God, is described by Averroes in religious terms as "eternal creation" (*muḥdaṯ*). And while he does not share the orthodox concept of the creation *ex-nihilo*, Averroes uses, however, this expression

to make explicit his own point of view, stating that it constitutes its exact interpretation". The discussion is subtle, but it highlights the kind of difficulties and of potential deformations that Averroes was facing in his attempt of establishing *a single* truth.

For his part, Kogan 1985, p. 203, highlights how the Averroist defense of the casual efficiency is based on the general conception of the change as a continuous and structured process, inherent to the specific natures of the particular objects having potentiality. It is a concept that, at once, properly agrees with his efforts to prove the eternity of the universe as a context within which change takes place continuously. The oxymoron "eternal creation" finds in Averroes a justification both physical and metaphysical: the (Aristotelian) doctrine of the eternity of movement; the one that considers absurd that the possible could never be translated into the actual, by which if a possibility exists, it will have to sooner or later be actualised; the one that considers God as a mind and a will that chooses the best, by which if God created a only finite cosmos, it would be imperfect (pp. 210–211). It is clear, however, that "the creation must be intended more in a distributive sense than in a collective one. This means that there does not exist any precise moment in the past where the world as a whole was created with the exclusion of other moments, preceding or following the one in which it was actually created. The individual parts by which the world is composed are what exists and continues to be created—potential objects, new relationships and relations between the objects. In short, the creation is not a unique event according to Averroes and certainly not an event to which it is possible to give a determined beginning. It is rather a continuous process that covers the totality of the time, identical to the generation of the single individual beings. This process can be called "creation" because it produces new entities, never existed before and also because it is, ultimately, the effect of a rational Mind and not of a blind natural force (p. 214).

Kogan's analysis confirms at last the equilibrium game of Averroes in the *Decisive Treatise*, when he distinguishes between uncreated being, created beings and a kind of being "in between", neither created nor uncreated. The creation, allegedly *ex nihilo*, gets to transform itself in the unexhausted translation from potentiality into actuality, from a non-being—which is not absolute non-existence, but a *tendency* to exist in a way of existence that consists of the effectual reality. There is no contradiction between the two terms of the issue—the "creation" and the "eternal continuous production"—, because the philosophic *discussion* prevails and, in a certain way, builds up reality.

Kogan 1984, pp. 207–212, further publishes again a little treatise of

ologians and the ancient philosophers is, in my opinion, to be traced back to a semantic question, especially as far as some of the ancients are concerned. Theologians and philosophers actually agree in saying that there are three kinds of beings: two extreme ones and one in the middle of the former; and they also agree in the definition to be given to the extremes, differing about the middle one.

One of the extremes is the being that has been translated into existence by something different from itself and by something preexisting, that is by an acting cause and by a raw material, so that its existence is preceded by time. This modality regards those bodies whose generation is perceived through the senses, namely water, earth, air, animals, plants and similar. This kind of existing beings is defined as a "product"[44] in the same manner by Aš'arite theologians and by ancient philosophers.

The opposite extreme is made up of a being that is produced by nothing nor is it preceded by anything else nor by time; and this kind of being was also named by the two classes of scholars in the same way, namely "eternal". This being, which is reached in a demonstrative way, is God the Blessed and Exalted, the Maker of all things and their Preserver, be praise onto Him and be His power exalted!

As far as the middle kind is concerned, this being has not been preceded by anything nor has it got time as its antecedent, but it owes its existence to something else—to an agent outside it. Such is the world in its general outlook. Now, theologians and philosophers agree in identifying the abovementioned features in the world. Even theologians grant that no time dimension has preceded the (creation) of the world, since it would rather have been the consequence thereto, as for them, time is inextricably connected to the bodies and to the movement. Furthermore, they admit, togeth-

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Averroes that has the purpose to clarify how the divergence between the ideas of orthodox theologians (*mutakallimūn*) and philosophers, is due "to the ambiguity of what they call "eternal" and "generated". Averroes would then come up again to highlight the mainly semantic or theoretical value of the divergences.

[44] Arabic: *muḥdaṯa*, which also implies a sense of contingency.

er with philosophers, that time is infinite *a parte post*, just like existence in the future is infinite.[45] The only difference concerns the elapsed time and existence in the past, which theologians deem finite—and that is moreover also Plato's and his followers' doctrine—, whereas Aristotle and his school deem them as infinite as the future.

Hence, the world seems to enjoy a double resemblance: with the single existing beings and with the Eternal one. Therefore, those insisting on the resemblance of the world to God rather than with contingents, define it as "eternal"; while those who prefer insisting on the resemblance with contingents, define it as "product". Yet the world is in fact neither properly created nor eternal, since what is created is by necessity corruptible, while the eternal has no cause determining it. There are, then—and here Plato and the Platonics are meant—those who call it "product and simultaneously coeval with time", and this because they believe time to be finite in the past.

The theories about the world are not then so divergent one from the other that some may be considered unbeliefs and others may not. For this to happen, the statements in discussion ought to be completely divergent and opposite, as the *mutakallimūn* (theologians) indeed (mistakenly) think; that is, the qualifications of eternal or generated, if applied to the world (in its globality) would need to be actual alternatives,[46] while from what we have said up to here, it is obvious that things go in a different way.

Moreover, such theories are contrary to the literary dictate of religious Law anyway, and this appears clear if we consider those

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[45] Because eternal and immortal are human souls and eternal is Heaven. One must remember that many Islamic theologians, beginning with some Muʿtazilites, considered the infernal punishment as non-eternal: on doomsday, God would destroy Ǧehenna.

[46] Leaman 2002 widely discusses the problem of how it is possible that the generation of the world is not compatible with eternity. To this purpose, explaining God's creative work (as it would result from a Platonic perspective) on a pre-existing material substrate is enough. Also, the concept of emanation would not appear so unacceptable, because it would be true that the world is coeval with God, but its position and his ontological reality would result subordinate to him, anyway.

verses revealed to prophets dealing with the translation into being of the world. In those verses, we read that the world has been created, but we also read that existence and time are continuous in both extremes, that is, they know no interruptions. The Most High says indeed: "It is Him who created the heavens and the earth in six days, while His Throne hovered over waters" (Q. 11:7). If meant in the literal sense, these words indicate that a (certain form of) being was existing before *this* being, namely the Throne and the waters, and that there existed a time before *this* time, a time connected with the type of existence, namely the number of movements of the celestial sphere. In the same way, the saying by the Most High: "The day on which earth shall be changed into another earth, and the heavens in other heavens" (Q. 14:48), if meant literally, indicates that there will exist another being after *this* being. Just like the following verse: "Then He engaged in the construction of the heaven, which was all smoke" (Q. 41:11), if meant literally, indicates that the heavens have been created from something that pre-existed.

Thus, not even theologians, when they deal with the world, keep adhering to the letter of religious Law, but they rather interpret (overcoming the letter). Indeed, Scriptures do not include any text suggesting that God existed in absolute privation (of any other being). How is it conceivable, then, that the allegories of theologians receive universal consent, when the literal meaning of Scriptures on the existence of the world is more respected by schools of philosophers?

Thus, it is likely to conclude that those holding differing opinions on such abstruse questions shall be rewarded by God if they have been right; they shall be forgiven by Him if they have been wrong. And indeed, consenting to a conclusion one has reached through demonstration which is rooted in the soul is a question of obligation and not of free choice. That is, it is not our faculty to refuse or accept that consent, just like it is our faculty deciding to stand or to sit down. And since free choice is one of the conditions for legal responsibility,[47] it derives hence that only those belonging

[47] Arabic: *kāna min šarṭ al-taklīf al-iḫtiyār*. The expression has a technical-juridical meaning; that is: free choice is proper to the mature and re-

to the category of men of science are excused for having consented to a mistake, whose likeliness led them off the track. This is why the Prophet—be peace onto him!—said: "If a magistrate, exerting his judgment capacity, applies truth, he shall be doubly rewarded; if he makes a mistake, a single reward". Now, which learned man is better than the one who knows how to judge on the reality of things, on their being so or so? These are the scholars to whom God gave the faculty of interpreting (Scriptures); and if there is a mistake that the Law forgives, it is precisely the mistake made by those who engage in the analysis of the difficult problems that the Law imposes to face.

On the other hand, the mistakes in science which have not been committed by this kind of people represent a great guilt, both if they were made in theoretical questions or if they were made in practical questions. Just like a jurist may not be forgiven for an evaluation mistake depending on his ignorance of the Prophet's *Sunna*, one demanding to pronounce doctrines on the real world without possessing the attitude for a similar office will not be forgiven, and he is a sinner or a unbeliever. And provided that it is necessary, for a magistrate who has to decide upon licit and illicit, to possess the instruments of reasonable judging—namely the knowledge of Law principles and the method to deduce the consequences of these principles through an analogical process—, so much more irreplaceable shall the competence of that be who must study the reality of things! He must indeed possess the rational principles and the method to deduce their consequences.

Two kinds of mistakes are made in religious questions: forgivable ones, by those who are suitable for the study of the topic in which the mistake occurs—as the mistake of a skilled physician is forgivable when he is exerting medicine, or that of a zealous jurist exerting justice—, or rather unforgivable ones, of those who are not "insiders"; or again those who may not be forgiven to any of men because, concerning the fundamentals of religion, they are to be considered unbeliefs, while, if they concern the principles deriv-

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sponsible man. *Taklif* means the social duty of an individual that is able to understand and act (see the following note 82).

ing from those fundamentals, they are to be considered as blamable innovations.[48]

The latter sort of mistakes are those which are committed when facing questions whose knowledge can be attained following different kinds of routes, so that they turn out to be allowed to all men. They are, for instance, the acknowledgement of the Blessed and Exalted God's (existence), or prophecy or Hereafter happiness and condemnation. As a matter of fact, the three abovementioned methods—demonstrative, dialectic and rhetoric—all lead in the same way to acceptance of these three truths, truths to which no man can but consent, being indeed obliged to know them. And this happens because, those who should deny them, being the fundamentals of religion, would inevitably be unbelievers showing their unbelief by their tongue, if not by their heart, namely by an attitude of guiltily denying the clear revelations thereabout (in the revealed Books).

If a man is a part of the demonstrative class, he has a route available which, precisely through demonstration, leads him to the consent to religious truths. Correspondingly, if he is a part of the dialectic class, he will be provided with a dialectic route; if he is a part of the class of those who are satisfied with preaching, he shall be supplied with a route based on preaching. This is why the Prophet said—peace onto him!—: "I was ordered to fight men until they witness that there is no other god but God and believe in my mission", actually meaning one of the three ways to faith, suitable to each, explained above.[49]

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[48] Hourani 1976, p. 58, and Alonso 1947, p. 180, translate with "heresy" the arabic *bidʿa* (cf. note 7 *supra)*, and Butterworth: "heretical innovation", but I believe that Averroes intended here to moderate the intensity of the guilt.

[49] Averroes seems here moderating the sense of the Prophet's expression, at first sight aggressive, alluding rather at Q. 16:125. The issue of the *ǧihād* as a means of forced conversion is too complex to be fully addressed here. A recent and in-depth analysis in Afsaruddin 2013. In his juridical treatise, Averroes seems to theorise a military and expansive conception of the *ǧihād*, and this is coherent with the expansive politics of the Almohads engaged in a harsh war with the Christian kings of the *Reconquista*. See Peters 1996, pp. 27–42. However, it is known that the term can

As far as problems are concerned whose obscurity can only be clarified through demonstration, God behaved with great mercy towards those servants of his who, be it out of their natural attitude or by habit or by educational lacks, were not able to achieve it: as a matter of fact, he formulated for them parallel examples and images to which he incited them to consent, since this kind of consent is attainable by means of dialectic or rhetorical directions sharable by all men.

This is why religious Law contains an exoteric and an esoteric side: the exoteric side consists of those images exemplifying the most intimate meaning; while the esoteric side consists of the same most intimate meaning, which results comprehensible to the demonstrative class only. These are the four or five classes of existing beings mentioned by Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī) in his book *On Distinction.*[50]

Provided, as we said, that things in themselves are known by three ways, it is not necessary for us (philosophers) to make up (simplifying) images thereof when their exoteric meaning needs no allegorical interpretation.

As far as fundamental principles are concerned, actually, those subjecting the literal sense to interpretation are unbelievers: for instance, those believing that in the Hereafter no bliss or deep unhappiness are felt, and that the purpose of this statement (about

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also be interpreted as a fight for the achievement of self-consciousness, of knowledge, of the control over one's own passions. Al-Ḡazālī 1970b, pp. 220–221, following a famous *ḥadīṯ* of the Prophet, writes that the "great *ǧihād*" is the fight and the combat to master passional instincts and to make the intellect triumph.

[50] al-Ḡazālī 1980a, pp. 151–152 (cap. III): "Existence has five stages…: essential (*ḏātī*), sensitive (*ḥissī*), imaginative (*ḫayālī*), mental (*ʿaqlī*) and analogical (*šibhī*)… The essential existence is real and stable beyond the sensation and the intellection… The sensitive existence consists of what is depicted from the visual power of the eye and does not exists outside it… The imaginative is the representation of the sensitive objects when they are not present… The mental means that the thing has a spirit, a reality, and a meaning, and the intellect acquires its abstract meaning… The analogical is when a thing does not exist in its form, … but what exists is something else that resembles it". See note 32.

the Hereafter) is only to protect men from each other concerning their bodily and sensitive lives, so that future life would appear as a trick, while there would be no other purpose in human life but the mere materialistic dimension.

Having established this, it is evident that there are texts in the Scriptures whose interpretation is not licit, because interpreting the fundamental principles of faith would be unbelief; or, in the case of derivative principles, a blamable innovation. On the other hand, there are texts whose literal sense the demonstrative class is obliged to suggest an interpretation of, as, should it stop at their apparent sense, it would commit in its turn an act of unbelief. It goes without saying that the interpretation of this latter kind of texts proposed by men who do not belong to the demonstrative class would turn out to be either unbelief or blamable innovation.

Passages or traditions requiring interpretations are exemplified by those already mentioned of God's "ascent" or "descent". It is remarkable that the Prophet—be peace on him!—, when a Negro woman told him that God lived in the sky, ordered not to punish her, considering her on the contrary a believer. As a point of fact, the Negro woman was not a part of the demonstrative class; and the reason for (the Prophet's) decision is that that kind of people, who does not give their consent but for the help of their imaginative faculty—since they transfigure everything through imagination—, has difficulty in recognising the existence of beings which are not in some way connected to something they can imagine.

This category also includes those who cannot conceive (God) without putting him in connection with some place; they are those who have only slightly surpassed the lowest degree of knowledge, staying bound to a concept of divine corporeality.[51]

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[51] I do not accept the variation in Hourani 1959, p. 25, note 223, taken up also by Geoffroy p. 143, and accepted here also by ʿAmāra, which introduces a negative connotation with the interpretation *bi-inkār* and translates (Hourani 1976, p. 60): "[by rejecting] belief in corporality", because it seems to me less consistent with the logic development of the discussion. The text could be amended with *fi nazar iʿtiqād al ǧismiyya.* Alonso 1947, p. 184, translates: "Estos con relación a los de la primera clase, avanzan un poco en la especulación y admiten la corporeitad". Also

In conclusion, the most appropriate answer for them, concerning these expressions, is that they are ambiguous, so a full stop must be set after the Most High's words: "True interpretation… is known by God alone". Even those belonging to the demonstrative class, despite agreeing on that (ambiguous texts) must be interpreted, yet do not at all agree on the interpretations to suggest, and this in connection with the degree of demonstrative knowledge each of them has achieved.

There is then a third category of religious texts that is placed between the two former ones,[52] about which it is licit to nourish some doubts. They are the texts to which some of those committed to the speculative study attribute an evident meaning, impossible to interpret, while others find a hidden meaning, which is impossible to grasp by the learned through a merely exoteric reading. Such a divergence depends on the obscurity and duplicity (of those texts); and who, among the learned, should commit mistakes (in interpreting them) is excused anyhow.

If somebody objected now: it is clear that religious Law provides for three levels (of approach) to these questions, but which of the three is according to you (philosophers) the most convenient for the future life and its states?—we would answer: it is a problem which, evidently, belongs to the kind about which there are wide divergences. There are for instance scholars who think themselves as being demonstrative, like the Aš'arite,[53] who endorse the neces-

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Butterworth, p. 20, does not accept the addition *bi-inkār* and translates: "who in their reflection have moved somewhat beyond the rank of the first sort's belief in corporeality".

[52] That is between that of the self-evident texts and that of the texts that have to be interpreted hermeneutically.

[53] The statement is unusual. The Aš'arites are theologians that certainly do not refuse the reason as a means of analysis of reality (cf. Leaman 2002, pp. 136, 140; Gardet-Anawati 1981, p. 57; Caspar 1987, p. 177), but they cannot be considered "rationalists" in the same way as philosophers. An Aš'arite like al-Ḡazālī, who was at the same time a spiritual, a jurist, a theologian and a crypto-philosopher, very much appreciated the logic and the mathematics as tools of certainty and evidence (al-Ḡazālī 1970a, pp. 92–95, al-Ḡazālī 1928, pp.11–12, but in general the whole work *Mi'yār al-'ilm* or *The Criterion of the Science*), but he maintains an ambiguous

sity to interpret (the texts about future life) in their literal meaning, as there exists no demonstrative evidence inducing to refuse such literal sense; whereas others deem it necessary to suggest an interpretation employing demonstration, even if they then greatly differ concerning the kind of interpretation to formulate. Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī) belongs to this second group, together with many other *ṣūfī* (mystics); and some of them, as precisely Abū Ḥāmid does in his books, feature two different (opposing) interpretations of the same topic.

It is acknowledgeable that the one among the learned who errs about these questions be pardoned, while, if he is right, he will be thanked and rewarded; yet he must accept the real existence (of the Hereafter), however, and, even if he subjected all that is interpretable to interpretation, for instance the way of existing of the Hereafter, he would not be able to deny its actual reality. Such a conclusion would indeed be unbelief, since future life is a part of the fundamental principles of religion, and to it one must necessarily give his consent, according to the three paths we have already specified common to "the white and the black".[54]

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attitude towards theology, which he often judges as a purely controversialist discipline, sometimes even claiming that true science comes from God's illumination (al-Ḡazālī 1970a, p. 85). It seems likely to me that Averroes's goal is to display a formal reverence towards a prestigious and "orthodox" theological current—even if not always well accepted in the Maḡreb and in Andalusia—, in order to highlight how "rationalism" is not unknown and unfamiliar among the classic Islamic *Kalām*.

[54] About the problem of future life, the *Decisive Treatise* does not adopt, overall, an established position. Averroes seems to say, on the one hand, that it is necessary to believe in some sort of physical dimension of the afterlife, since it is in that direction that Scriptures move, and to Scriptures one must give an obligatory and generalised consent. On the other hand, however, denying a spiritual dimension of the afterlife impoverishes and degrades human life. In the *Kitāb al-Kašf ʿan Manāhiḡ al-Adilla* (Hourani 1976, pp. 76 ff. e Alonso 1947, pp. 346 ff.), Averroes takes up the problem anew, claiming that Islamic scholars greatly differ in the way of symbolising future life. Moreover, he identifies three "sects": one, that we would consider "materialistic" and that clearly corresponds to the populace, identifies the joys of the afterlife with those of worldly life; a second one, that clearly is that of philosophers, considers that heavenly joys are

purely spiritual; a third one, that should be that of theologians, considers Heaven as material, but of a different materiality from the earthly one (in fact, al-Ḡazālī considered a physical resurrection of the bodies undeniable, even if Heaven can certainly not be compared to a beautiful garden rich in rivers and plants). Averroes gives good evidence of his flawed position. Indeed, first of all he claims that it is the third hypothesis, and not the second one, to be more convenient to the *élite;* he then affirms that "the duty of man is to adhere to the conclusions he reaches through the studies"; lastly, he highlights how the Qurʾān does not allow doubts concerning the immortality and the spirituality of the soul, but he also compares the state of death with that of the sleep, during which the biological and material functions of life are like suspended, but not annihilated. In the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Averroes 1930, pp. 585–587, Averroes 1997 p. 532 ff.) Averroes discusses once again about the immortality of the soul and he approves of the Islamic point of view that, in his opinion, would consider the afterlife a middle way between pure materiality and pure spirituality. Indeed, "concluding that the soul is immortal cannot be avoided, as it is easy to prove both rationally and from a religious point of view, and that what rises of the body is like a simulacrum of the concrete bodies, even if not properly the body itself. Indeed, what does not exist anymore cannot assume any individuality, and a thing can come back only as the image of the body that perished, as al-Ḡazālī declares instead" (tr. also in Campanini 1989, pp. 100–101). Al-Ḡazālī, therefore, as a theologian, is wrong in supporting a physical resurrection of the bodies adhering "literally" to the religious dogmatics; however, philosophers do not completely reject the materiality of the destiny of the soul, but they allegorise, transforming the sensitive body into a simulacrum. All of it, however, it is worth reminding, happens in the framework of the "civil" legitimisation of religion that is useful to found in order to support social order. It is very interesting to compare Avicenna's position (Avicenna 1969) with this Averroist conception. Avicenna believes that the Scriptures speak to the uncultivated with a language accessible to them (p. 60); that is precisely why their literal meaning is not convenient to philosophers, but needs an allegorisation: "all of this is a discussion to make those who ask to be one of the *élite*, and not of the common people, understand that the literal meaning [of revealed Law] does not bring any evidence [on the problem of future life]" (p. 62). Avicenna thinks that future life consists of a spiritual pleasure and grief (p. 188) and that, in feeling an otherworldly pleasure—a mainly rational pleasure—the soul gets closer to the angels (p. 200). "Otherworldly happiness takes place when the soul frees itself from the body and from the influence of nature, and it strips itself [of the

As far as those men are concerned who do not belong to the class of the learned, for them it is obligatory to adhere to the literal sense (of the Holy Texts), because for them, in fact, interpretation is unbelief, leading them to unbelief. This is why we think that common people must believe in the literal sense, while allegorical interpretation is (for them) an authentic unbelief, leading them to unbelief. Whoever of the learned should spread interpretation with common people, would be a spreader of unbelief; and he who spreads unbelief, is a unbeliever himself.

Therefore, it is necessary that only the books written in a demonstrative style should contain interpretations, as these books are read only by those who are experts in demonstration. While if (interpretations) are contained in non-demonstrative books and they are employed for legal, rhetorical or dialectic reasonings, as does Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī), a severe mistake is committed both towards religious Law and towards philosophy, even if the intention is good. Indeed, even if one wanted to multiply the number of the learned, what one would end up with would be to actually multiply the number of the ignorant! The result thereof would be that some would discredit philosophy, others religious Law, and others again would try to synthesise them together. This seems to be one of the main purposes of (al-Ḡazālī's) books; the demonstration of how he aimed at urging the natural dispositions[55] (of the individual

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body], perfect in essence, looking with an intellectual stare at the essence of the One that has the supreme power" (p. 204). It is however implied that the loftiness of rational pleasure is only proper to philosophers. Indeed, Avicenna outlines a precise hierarchy of souls and of bliss reserved for them, which, of course, are inferior for common people or for children having died before becoming adults or for fools to those of perfect and purified souls, as, no doubt, are those of saints and philosophers (pp. 208–212).

[55] Hourani 1976, p. 61, Butterworth (Averroes 2001, p. 22) translate "minds"; Alonso 1947, p. 186: "espiritus"; Geoffroy: "ésprits". The Arabic has: *fiṭar*, plural of *fiṭra.* Van Den Bergh (in Averroes 1954, note 8.3, p. 7 of the "Notes") translates the term as "sound understanding" corresponding to the stoic *orthòs lògos.* However, (see Abdou 1973, *sub indice) fiṭra* has often, in Averroes' language, also the meaning of "instinct", "attitude", "natural gift". Butterworth remembers that the Arabic expression

readers) is that he did not adhere completely to any doctrine, but he professed himself Aš^{c}arite with the Aš^{c}arite, mystic with the *ṣūfī*, philosopher with philosophers. The distich perfectly suits him:[56]

> One day as a Yemenite, if I meet a Yemenite, and one day as an ^{c}Adnānī, if I meet a Ma^{c}addī.

Actually, it would be indispensable for Muslim chiefs to prohibit the reading of his (al-Ḡazālī's) books containing elements of science, except to those who are expert in science. Analogously, the chiefs of the Muslims must prohibit all books containing demonstrative reasonings, except to those who are trained in this type of argumentation. However, the evil inherent in philosophical books is lighter (than that inherent in books mixing demonstration and dialectics) because these books are taken up, in the majority of cases, only by people who have a natural attitude to benefit thereof; and those can be misled only by the lack of moral virtues or rather by readings performed without a method or without the guide of suitable teachers. To prohibit philosophical books absolutely means, on the other hand, to hinder the way religious Law itself actually pointed out, since it would be an unfair action towards the best kind of men and living beings.

It is a fact of justice towards the most outstanding of existing beings to have their worth acknowledged only by those who are ready to grant that acknowledgement, namely the most outstanding kind of men.[57] And the existing being is the nobler, the greater the offence made to him not knowing him properly. Therefore, did the Most High say: "Idolatry is the highest unfairness" (Q. 31:13).

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means literally: "innate dispositions". I do not see then why to change the literal meaning, provided that the term *fiṭra* is a pregnant Qur'ānic word (Q. 30:30), and that Averroes is trying to make his ideas palatable to theologians.

[56] By ^{c}Imrān Ibn Ḥittān, cf. Hourani 1976, p. 107, note 145

[57] Of course, by excellent species of existing beings Averroes means God, angels, intellects; and as excellent species of men, philosophers. The latter are inexcusable if they do not know (demonstratively) God, because they cause offence to the noblest and greatest of beings.

This is what we thought we had to highlight analytically, namely (the possibility) of a dialogue[58] between religious Law and philosophy, and the conditions (of lawfulness) of the interpretation of Scriptures. If it were not for the spread these problems have experienced with common people, we would never have dared writing about it; nor would we have needed to apologise with "insiders", since the kind of questions we have tackled is (usually) discussed in philosophy books.

God is the guide and He who guarantees achievement of truth.

II

Know that the purpose of religious Law is to teach true knowledge and rightful behaviour.[59] True knowledge is that of God, praised and exalted, and of the (nature) of existing things as they are—especially of the noblest among them—, and the knowledge of happiness and misery awaiting us in the Hereafter. Rightful behaviour consists of acting so as to attain happiness and avoid misery.

The knowledge of these acts is defined as practical science, and it is divided in two parts: the science of external or bodily acts, which is also called jurisprudence; and the science of interior acts like thankfulness (towards God), patience and other moral acts which have been made obligatory or prohibited by religious Law.

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[58] Hourani 1976, p. 62, translates: "correspondence"; Alonso 1947, p.187, "relaciones". But it seems to me an interpretative stretch in a concordistic way, where Averroes uses the term *takallum* that derives from the verb *takallama*, "to dialogue", "to talk". Geoffroy: "discours"; Butterworth "discussion".

[59] This statement, besides being rigorously philosophical, coordinating metaphysics and ethics, is, according to Urvoy 1991, p.19, attributable to the Almohad ideology: "Almohadism was a synthesis of a theology, grounded on the analysis of the problem of inference and on the assumption of the existence of an Absolute Being, with a practical philosophy naturally consistent with Islamic Law and based on the notion of divine transcendence. From this the division derives between the sphere of faith, which was purely rational, and that of practice, which relies almost entirely on positive methods".

Such is the science called "ascetism" or "of future life". Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī) dedicated himself to it in his book *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, where he describes how men must give up (the things of the world) and how they must point at (future life). These (behaviours) permit one to achieve that devotion to God which is the cause of happiness.[60] But let's now get back to our topic, from which we have moved too far away.

The aim of the Law is to teach truth and rightful behaviour, and that teaching, as was highlighted by logicians, is of two kinds: either pertaining to concepts or pertaining to judgments. Now, the methods of judging which are available to men are three: demonstrative, dialectic and rhetorical; while the methods to form concepts are two: either one conceives the thing in itself or through one of its symbols.

It is not really in anyone's nature to master the demonstrative method, nor the dialectic, since to learn the contents of the demonstration is difficult, and even those who are qualified to do so need much time. Hence, as the purpose of the Law is to educate masses,

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[60] It is al-Ḡazālī 's "practical" science, as he outlines in the framework of the mystical path towards God (cf. Campanini 1991), both in the *Iḥyā'* (al-Ḡazālī 1985) and in the *Arbaʿīn* (al-Ḡazālī 1970b). The ten stages bringing to God and, after death, to afterworldly happiness are, in the corresponding works:

Iḥyā'	*Arbaʿīn*
1) Repentance	1) Repentance
2) Patience and gratitude	2) Fear of God
3) Fear of God and hope	3) Asceticism
4) Poverty and asceticism	4) Patience
5) The Oneness of God and the abandon to him	5) Gratitude (to God)
6) Love, familiarity, and being content with God's decree	6) Sincerity and sincere worship
7) Intention and sincerity	7) Abandon to God
8) Control and soul searching	8) Love
9) Meditation	9) Being content with God's decree
10) Death and afterlife.	10) The memory of death.

As can be seen, besides some "shifts", the mystical *iter* outlined by al-Ḡazālī in the two pieces of work is substantially identical. On this subject, the *Balance of action* can also be read (al-Ḡazālī 2005).

it is necessary for the Law to contain all possible methods to judge and to formulate concepts.

There are then methods of judgment which are common to the majority of men, namely the rhetorical and the dialectical—the rhetorical is even more general than the dialectical—, and a specific method for a narrower circle of individuals, namely the demonstrative. As the main purpose of Scriptures is to take care of the majority, without neglecting the *élite* though, the (epistemologically) predominant methods in the field of religion are those proper to the majority, in order to formulate both judgments and concepts.

In general, methods applicable to the study of religion can be subdivided into four kinds.

The first is grounded on a common method that attains certain concepts and judgments, in spite of their rhetoric and dialectic origin. The sillogisms deriving thereof, though consisting of currently known and accepted (ideas), start from certain premises[61] and achieve conclusions that must be accepted without symbolisations. They are, in brief, those statements of the religious Law which do not imply the *ta'wīl* or interpretation; and those who put them in question or, precisely, interpret them (trespassing the literal sense) are to be considered unbelievers.

The second type of method is the one starting from premises which, even though they consist in currently known and accepted (ideas), are certain, while the conclusions which are expected to be achieved are symbolical. This method applies to statements whose *ta'wīl* is licit, at least as far as the conclusions are concerned.

The third type is opposite to the second: its conclusions are precisely those which the research is aiming at, and its premises are

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[61] Arabic: *haḍihi'l-maqāiys hiya al-maqāiys allatī ʿaraḍa li-muqaddimātihā maʿa kawnihā mašhūratan aw maẓnūnan an takūn yaqīniyyatan.* Hourani 1976, p. 64, means *ʿaraḍa* as "are accidentally certain" (analogously Geoffroy: "certaines accidentellement"; but this sense of casualty does not seem acceptable within the framework of a refusal of the hermeneutic interpretation. Alonso 1947, p. 190, translates more linearly: "Son éstos los razonamientos cuyas premisas, aunque sean solo de sentido común… son ciertas y además sus consecuencias son admisibiles in si mismos…". Butterworth. "whose premises happen to be certain, even though they are generally accepted or suppositional".

commonly known and accepted, despite not necessarily being certain. It is a type of method whose conclusions do not imply the *ta'wīl*, while some interpretation can be performed on the premises.

The fourth type is that in which premises are known and accepted, even though they are not certain, and in which the expected conclusions are symbolical. Statements deriving herefrom must be the object of interpretation by the *élite*, while it is the duty of the masses to stop at their literal sense.[62]

In general, all that of these (statements) requires an interpretation, which can only be understood by a demonstrative way, and it is a precise duty of the *élite* to engage therein. On the other hand, it is the duty of the masses to take them according to their literal sense, both as far as concepts and as far as judgments are concerned, since the nature of masses is not capable of overcoming the (exoteric) level.

Scholars of religious Law sometimes happen to formulate interpretations because of the greater ability of one of the usual (inquiry) tools compared to another to produce consent: for instance, in case the interpretation gives globally more complete and persuasive directions than the literal sense. They are widespread interpretations, and it may be that (knowing them) is due for those who have a reasoning ability reaching the dialectic level. Some of the Aš'arite' ' and the Mu'tazilites'[63] theories belong to this type of in-

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[62] In short, as already said on pages 29–30 of the *Introduction*:

a) from sure premises to sure conclusions (no possible allegorical interpretation);

b) from sure premises to symbolic conclusions (subject to allegorical interpretation);

c) from commonly-believed premises, but not sure (subject to allegorical interpretation), to sure conclusions;

d) from commonly-believed premises, but not sure, to symbolic conclusions whose allegorical interpretation is *compulsory* for philosophers.

As can be seen, nevertheless, Averroes unfortunately does not put forward explanatory models of these four methods in the *Decisive Treatise*.

[63] The Mu'tazila is considered by many, without entirely good reasons, as the most rationalistic of the classical Islamic theological currents. It flourished in Iraq in the 9th century, mainly in Baghdad and Basra, and its theological principles are substantially opposite to the Aš'arite ones (cf.

terpretation, even though Muʿtazilites are much more rigorous in their statements. As far as the masses are concerned, though, whose abilities do not go beyond the rhetorical level, their duty is to stay faithful to the literal sense, because it is absolutely illicit that they learn some of the non-literal meanings.

Hence, in connection with religious Law, men are divided into three groups: the first, to whom the interpretation does not fit at all, consists of the greatest majority of people, which is suited for rhetorical argumentation. No man gifted with intellect may refuse to consent to this kind of argumentation.

The second group is that which benefits of dialectic interpretation: and dialectic, one becomes either by nature or by nature and education. The third group is that of true interpretation: they are the demonstrative people, who are such out of their natural dispo-

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the previous note 26). The main ones are the so-called "five principles" (*al-uṣūl al-ḫamsa*): a) God does not have real attributes, separated from his essence (al-Ašʿarī will accuse the Muʿtazilites of *taʿṭīl*, that is of depriving God of concrete reality in order to make him absolutely "abstract": in fact, for the Muʿtazilites, conferring on God attributes separated from the essence is sinning by polytheism, indeed it would mean considering them as many gods); b) man is totally free and responsible for his actions and he has the possibility of choosing between good and evil; c) God *must* punish the evil and reward the good, otherwise He would be unjust; consequently, He is obliged to make "the best" for creatures; d) the sinner lies halfway between faith and unbelief, he cannot be properly considered neither a believer nor an infidel; e) the true believer has to defend his faith at the risk of his own life and he has to strive to prevent the realisation of evil. From a political point of view, a number of Muʿtazilites had ʿAlid tendencies, if not even Shiite: but the argument is too complex to be addressed here in detail. The Muʿtazilism became official theology of the Islamic empire under the caliphate of the ʿAbbāsid al-Maʾmūn (*regnavit* 813–833) and even an inquisitorial court (the *miḥna*) was organised to impose their theology—especially the doctrine of the created Qurʾān - on the other reluctant doctors of the Law. Among the main persecuted individuals, the often mentioned Ibn Ḥanbal. A distinctive Muʿtazilite doctrine, besides the previous "five principles", was exactly that of the "created" Qurʾān: it would not be, as stated by Ašʿarites, a "Word" coeternal with God, but one of his "productions", like the world and the things. Cf. for a general overview Campanini 2012.

sition or out of training in the art of philosophy. The interpretation this latter group suggests must not be communicated to the dialectic, far less to the masses.

If these interpretations are shared with someone who is not able to comprehend them, especially if they are demonstrative conclusions far away from common sense, both the interpreter and the receiver of the interpretation are led to unbelief. The cause thereof lies in the fact that the (interpreter's) purpose is the refusal of the literal sense and the imposition of interpretation: therefore, if the literal sense is destroyed in the mind of those who can understand that only, without being able to simultaneously welcome the interpretation, they are led to unbelief especially if the principles of religion are being discussed.

Thus, interpretations must not be revealed to the masses, neither including them in rhetorical nor in dialectical texts, as Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī) did in both cases. To the masses (I will repeat) these things must not be commented. And when it is claimed that the literal sense of a proposition may or may not be evident to the masses in itself, that is, whether it needs an interpretation the masses cannot achieve, it is concluded that the interpretation of this proposition is known to God alone. In these cases, it is necessary to put a full stop after the Sublime Powerful's words: "The true interpretation of those passages is known but to God". The same kind of attitude must be reserved to those abstruse questions that the masses are not able to understand, according to the Most High's words: "They shall ask you about the Spirit. Answer: the Spirit (proceeds) from my Lord's order, but you have been endowed with but a little science" (Q. 17:85).

Then, he who spreads interpretations to the people who are not ready to receive them is an unbeliever who incites unbelief. And this is exactly the opposite of what the Supreme Legislator meant to do, particularly when the interpretations cause the perversion of the principles of religion. Some people in fact behave like that nowadays, and we have verified that these people mistakenly believe themselves to be just like philosophers and, with their unu-

sual[64]knowledge, they achieve conclusions totally in disagreement with religious Law about all issues, especially those which do not admit of an allegorical interpretation. (Naturally), these individuals (claim) that it is necessary to spread these conclusions to the masses. Convinced thereof, they become propagandists with the common people of beliefs which induce perversion and cause perdition to the masses and to themselves, both in this and in the next world.

The purpose of those (pretending to reveal to the masses the meanings hidden in the Scriptures) and God's end are explained in the following apologue. Let's imagine a man who goes to a skilled doctor. The doctor's purpose is to preserve his patients' health and eliminate illnesses. So he prescribes his patients the rules they must follow and the obligatory use of medicines that preserve their health and cure them from disease and avoid the opposite. And it is not possible for the patients to become doctors themselves, as only the doctor demonstratively knows the way to preserve health and eliminate pathologies. Now, he (who wants to reveal to the masses the meanings hidden in the Scriptures) is like that who hinders patients and tells them: "Look, what your doctor has prescribed to you is wrong", frustrating thus the usefulness of therapies. (Out of metaphor), he is like the one who presents the masses with interpretations that they are not able to understand nor to which they can consent. Do you believe that a patient like the one I have described (after the bad advisor's warnings) will behave in such a way as to safeguard his health and keep diseases off? Or do you believe that such a bad advisor will be able, after having destroyed the patients' trust in the doctor's therapies, to cure them himself? Of course not, he will not be able to do so; neither will patients be able to cure themselves, so they will all die.

This would happen to the populace also if correct interpretations were spread about (theological) problems, because they would not be able to understand them. Even worse if the interpretation were wrong, because that would cause the populace not to

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[64] Arabic: *ʿağība*. Hourani 1976, p. 66, translates "remarkable"; Alonso 1947, p. 193, "maravillosa"; Geoffroy: "merveilleuse": Butterworth: "astounding". I perceive, in Averroes' words, a certain degree of irony.

acknowledge that there is a health to be preserved and a disease that must be cured, and that there are means by which health can be preserved and disease kept off. The behaviour of those who spread interpretations with the masses and with those who do not belong to the "insiders" concerning religious Law, corrupts the very religious Law and diverts from it; and whoever diverts from the acceptance of religious Law is an unbeliever.

(The doctor's) apologue expresses a truth; the point is not a mere poetic metaphor, as someone might object. It describes, indeed, an authentic analogy, since the doctor's relationship with the body health is identical to the Legislator's relationship to the soul health. The doctor is the one who tries to preserve the bodies health when they are healthy, and to restore it when they are ill; the Legislator does the same as far as the souls well-being is concerned, which can also be defined as "fear of God".[65] Indeed the Holy Book, in several verses, incites us to practice fear of God with acts complying with religious Law; for instance the Most High said: "Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those who were before you, in the hope that you may become God-fearing" (Q. 2:183), and: "Surely their blood and their flesh do not reach God, but your fear surely reaches God" (Q. 22:37); and also: "Prayer preserves from turpitude and from evil" (Q. 29:45); and many others of the same tone. The Supreme Legislator, with the knowledge and the practice of religion, has tried to guarantee the (spiritual) health, which, in turn, guarantees bliss in the afterlife, while the opposite produces affliction and suffering in the afterlife.

From what has been said it must then appear clear that it is obligatory to avoid inserting interpretations—even if correct ones—in books addressing the masses; worse even if they are in-

[65] Arabic: *taqwā*, with the Latin meaning of *pietas*. Hourani 1976, p. 67, translates "fear of God"; more flexible Alonso 1947, p. 195: "piedad o timor de Dios" and Geoffroy: "piété révérencieuse"; Butterworth: "piety". The term is Qur'ānic, and it appears several times in the Holy Book: for example, in Q. 2:197, where Zilio Grandi translates "timore (fear)"; or in Q. 5:8, where Bausani translates "pietà (piety)".

correct. A true interpretation represents an element of certainty,[66] with which man has been charged with and takes charge of because the other existing beings have avoided the burden thereof, as the Most High said: "We have proposed the Pledge to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they refused to carry it and were afraid of it. But man charged himself with it" (Q. 33:72).[67]

Because of the interpretations, especially the wrong ones, and of the opinion that it would be necessary, according to religious Law, to communicate them to the masses, Islamic sects emerged, the one accusing the other of unbelief or blamable innovations. For instance, Muʿtazilites commented upon many verses and prophetic traditions and spread their hermeneutics with the masses; and Ašʿarites did the same, even though less frequently. As a consequence of this, they cast men into hate and mutual war, tearing up the unity of the Law and provoking deep divisions in the population.

Let it be added that the method they pursued to enunciate the interpretations was not appropriate for masses nor for the elite. Not for masses, because their argumentations were much more difficult than the one commonly in use; not for the elite, as such argumentations, if examined in depth by an expert, turn out to be lacking of demonstrative strength. Furthermore, many of the principles on which Ašʿarites grounded their knowledge were sophistic, going as far as denying many necessary (philosophical) truths: for instance, the permanence of accidents; the mutual influence of

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[66] Arabic: *amāna*. Hourani 1976, p. 68: "true allegory is the deposit…"; Butterworth: "deposit"; Alonso 1947, p. 195: "depósito"; Geoffroy: "depot". The Dictionary Wehr Cowan (p. 29) gives as first meaning "reliability, trustworthiness". I translated "certainty" according to what already said in the "Introduction": by "allegorical interpretations" Averroes mainly means the demonstrative conclusions grounded on philosophy, which induce "certainty".

[67] I have reported the whole verse, while Averroes merely mentions it. The term translated by Zilio Grandi with "pledge" is again *amāna*. Elsewhere, in the Qurʾān, the term has the juridical meaning of "mutual guarantee" (Q. 2:283) or "trusted deposits (Q. 4:58). For the meaning of "trust", cf. Q. 8:27.

things; the existence of causes that provoke effects; the substantial forms; the second causes.

Some theoreticians,[68] following this setting up, assumed a hostile position towards Muslims: thus, there is an Aš'arite sect accusing of unbelief anyone not attaining the acknowledgement of the Creator's existence—praise be on Him!—by the argumentations contained in the books composed by them to this purpose. Yet indeed it is them who are unbelievers and corrupted! From here on, they differentiate themselves saying that: "the most necessary of things is rational study"; or, on the contrary, "it is pure faith"; this (happens) because they do not know which are the (argumentative) methods sharable by men, the methods thanks to which religious Law incites all (to adhere to its truths). On the contrary, they object that there is only one method, and in this way they misunderstand the aims of the Supreme Legislator and they mislead themselves and their neighbour.

Now, should somebody object:[69] If the methods employed by Aš'arites and other (orthodox) scholars are not those commonly sharable—namely those thanks to which the Legislator wanted to teach the masses and without which it is not possible to perform that teaching—which will then be the methods admitted by our religious Law? We would answer: they are the methods exclusively provided in the Holy Book. If examined carefully, it shows it contains all three methods suitable for the (various categories) of men; and the commonly sharable ways are such that one can proceed

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[68] The Arabic is *nuẓẓār*. Alonso 1947, p. 196, says bluntly: "teólogos"; Geoffroy: "penseurs speculatifs"; Butterworth: "those who reflect".

[69] The objection is delicate because it concerns the universality of religious education. Averroes answers in an "orthodox" way: the obliged reference point for a universal faith, that involves the common people, theologians and philosophers, is the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān, however, is considered at once as a rhetoric, dialectic and demonstrative book, and therefore it is rich not only in apodeictic truths, but in myths and simplifying and naive images. In this way, Averroes could be accused of compromising on the sanctity of the text: and it is precisely this disrespectfulness towards the revealed character of the Scriptures that al-Ġazālī, among other things, reproached philosophers with.

and teach both to the masses and the *élite.*[70] If the question is considered carefully,[71] it is evident that no methods to educate the masses better than those mentioned in the Qurʾān can be found.

And those who alter them using an interpretation which is not evident in itself or (deemed) more greatly evident with masses—yet this (alleged) greater evidence is unconceivable—indeed to undermine the Qurʾān's wisdom[72] and to undermine its purpose to benefit human happiness. This appears manifest if the genuine way (of behaving) of the first (Muslims) is compared to that of those who came after them. Indeed, the first (Muslims) gained perfect excellence and fear of God adhering to Qurʾānic dictates without advancing any interpretation of them; and if by chance they interpreted, surely they did not spread their conclusions. Their successors, on the contrary, made use of interpretation; they weakened their fear of God and increased the inner dissent; their mutual love vanished and sects have multiplied.

It is necessary, for anyone who wants to eliminate these dangerous innovations of the Law, to lever the Holy Book up, extract from it the directions contained therein regarding all things that we have the juridical obligation[73] to believe, and make an effort to study their apparent sense whenever possible, without demanding to give an interpretation thereof, unless that interpretation does not

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[70] Arabic: *akṯar al-nās waʾl-ḫassa.* Alonso 1947, p. 197: "mayoría… espiritus electos". Oddly Hourani 1976, p. 69: "the majority of the people and the special method" (but Butterworth: "…the select (people)"). Geoffroy: "l'enseignement du plus grand nombre, et les [procédés] particuliers".

[71] Another odd translation of Hourani, p. 69: "if their merits [?] are inspected"; simply Butterworth: "if the matter is examined in respect to them". Geoffroy: "Et si l'on songe à ce qu'il en est…".

[72] The term used is *ḥikma*, and, in this context, it is very meaningful. Certainly here, with regard to the Qurʾān, it means wisdom, but let me remind that Averroes uses it in the *Treatise* to indicate philosophy! Thus, it is as if he made philosophy coincide with Qurʾānic wisdom.

[73] Averroes uses the verb *kallafa* (cf. previous note 47). I have intensified in this way the trans. that in Hourani 1976, p. 70, is only "it obliges us to believe". Butterworth: "responsible for believing". Geoffroy: "nous sommes chargés [par la Loi]…".

assert itself because it appears immediately evident to all. Indeed, if the useful statements contained in the Law to educate the masses are examined thoroughly, it seems that through them[74] a limit of literal evidence is reached which, as far as what is not at all evident, must not be overcome but by a (philosopher) who employs demonstration. Such peculiarity cannot be found elsewhere.

The principles of the religious Law that the Holy Book makes manifest to the masses, have three characteristics that demonstrate its miraculous inimitability: the first is that there do not exist principles compelling to a fuller and more complete consent and adherence by everyone (of the men); the second is that they are a natural means to individualise that limit beyond which the interpretation—if an interpretation is even permissible—is reserved for the demonstrative philosophers, the third is that they contain indications addressed to those able to formulate a true interpretation (in order to make them engage in it). But this ability is found neither among the Aš'arites nor among the Mu'tazilites, whose interpretations are not useful at all, neither do they include clear indications of the truth, nor are they true. This is why the dangerous innovations multiplied!

Had I the strength and the ability to commit myself to a similar task, and had God granted me sufficient life, it would be my wish to work intensively on this,[75] as far as it would seem manageable and it was useful to those who will come after me. Indeed,

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[74] Arabic: *min nuṣratihā*, which Hourani translates with "in mastering their meaning"; Butterworth: "reaches the point"; Alonso 1947, p.198, with "fuerza persuasiva"; Geoffroy: "se montrent si convaincants…". In my opinion, Averroes wants to say that the Qur'ān itself contains clear invitations not to allegorise, therefore "through its mean (help)" it is possible to confirm what the philosopher is saying.

[75] According to Hourani 1976, notes 194 and 186, Averroes would herald here the composition of the *Kitab al-Kašf 'an Manahiğ al-Adilla*. More in general, according to Alonso 1947, p. 199, Averroes would promise to prove in the future the falsity and the errors of the Mu'tazilite and Aš'arite theologians. In the general context, it seems to indicate a desire of the philosopher to dedicate himself to a hermeneutic interpretation of the Scriptures in order to avoid the lamenting misfortunes on which he focusses immediately thereafter.

(my) soul is embittered by deep affliction and grief for the sects that bring perversion in the religious Law and for the erroneous beliefs (that distort it), especially for those professed by men relating themselves to philosophy. Blows dealt by a friend hurt more than those dealt by an enemy: and since philosophy is a friend to religion, and is even its foster sister, the blows dealt (to religion) from those who would like to be kindred to the philosophers are more hurtful, without accounting for the enmities, the hate and the conflicts that are fanned by it. On the contrary, philosophy and religion accompany each other by nature, and by essence and inclination they mutually love each other with a deep love. Now, many ignorant friends of religion, claiming an affinity (with philosophy), damage religion itself; and this is what the (infinite) sects that exist nowadays do. But God aims[76] (at the good) for everyone and He tries to bring closer the totality (of men) to his love, bringing the hearts closer as brothers with the fear of Him and moving hate and resentment away from them, thanks to his nobility and mercy.

As a matter of fact, God has alleviated many of these sufferings and He has straightened many of these absurdities and deviations thanks to the current superior order of things.[77] Through it,

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[76] Arabic: *saddada*, which, besides the meaning of "to guide, to lead in the good direction", that is given to it by Hourani, Alonso e Geoffroy, has also the one of "to aim, to focus". Butterworth: "God shows to people the right way".

[77] As already said in the "Introduction" (*supra*, p. 7), I agree with the political interpretation already put forward by Rosenthal 1958 about this passage. The reference would seem, beyond any possible doubt, to the Almohad regime that Averroes considered as positive. Hourani 1976, p. 70 and Butterworth (Averroes 2001, p. 33) translate: "this triumphant rule", and Hourani comments too (p. 116, note 196): "The Arabic term *amr* ["rule" or "order"] can be interpreted as "regime": the sentence would then refer to the victorious dynasty of the Almohads". Alonso, p. 199, n. 2, finds it difficult to admit that the "governor" was an enemy of the Aš'arism of Ibn Tūmart, *mahdī* and founder of the dynasty. The passage, however, emphasises the positive method of "calling the masses to know God through the way of the middle path" and it does not imply a real suppression of Aš'arism. In any case, it is very probable that Abū Ya'qūb had abandoned Aš'arite opinions because of his philosophical interests.

God has opened many ways to the good and He has especially favoured those who devote themselves to the rational study and who desire to know the true. Moreover (the current system) has called the masses to know God—praise Him!—according to a middle path,[78] which is distant from the scantiness of the blindest traditionalism, in the same way as it is sheltered from the factiousness of the theologians, and He has urged the élite to devote themselves mandatorily to the rational and complete study of the principles of religion.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds![79]

APPENDIX
ON THE DIVINE SCIENCE

[ḌAMĪMA]

ON THE PROBLEM ALREADY MENTIONED BY THE ŠAYḪ ABŪ'L WALĪD IN THE "DECISIVE TREATISE".

May God preserve your power, maintain on you His blessing and deflect from you the eye of the bad fortune![80]

[…] The "benefits" for the scientists' and philosophers' class can well mean the protection and the encouragement offered to them by the Almohads, and the "middle path" for the masses can well be the diffusion among the populace of the Traditions realised by the dynasty. Marrākušī reports how Abū Yaʿqūb gathered Traditions about the *ǧihad* and he dedicated them to his army". Geoffroy translates "pouvoir vinqueur": indeed, the allusion to the triumphing Almohad power is explicit.

[78] The Qurʾān (Q. 2: 143) says: "We have made of you a nation that follows the Middle Path". The *medietas* in the behaviours is strongly claimed also by al-Ġazālī (cf. *The Balance of action* in al-Ġazālī 2005)and can be considered as a typical mindset of Islam (see the observations of Laoust 1983b, pp. 441–446).

[79] Hourani 1959, p. 40, n. 405, adds this possible conclusion: "The book has been concluded—praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds, and the blessing be on all his Prophets!—on the 29th day of the month of Rabīʿ the second of the year… three". The composition of the *Decisive Treatise* is to be placed anyway around 1179–1180.

Since, because of the excellence of your intellect and the nobility of your nature, you are by far superior to those who deal with these sciences, and your careful study led you to dwell on the doubts that arise regarding the eternal knowledge (of God)—praise be upon Him!—as far as it is related to the things created by Him[81]—, it is imperative for us, in order to give the right worth to the truth and to end your uncertainties on the topic, solve these

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[80] It is obviously almost certain that the auspicious expressions are addressed to the Almohad dynasty and to its philosophical inclined princes. From the context, it emerges anyway that the *Ḍamīma* or "Appendix" was composed as a note or a working document intended for a private and restricted circulation. Alonso 1947, pp. 356–365, translates the *Ḍamima;* however, not from the Arabic original, but rather from the very liberal version that appears in the *De pugio fidei* by Ramón Martí, an apologetic volume of Christianity against Jews and Muslims, composed around 1278. Geoffroy does not translate the *Ḍamima* while Butterworth encloses the Arabic Text.

[81] The problem addressed in the *Ḍamīma* is that of the knowledge of the particulars by God, which according to al-Ġazālī was denied by philosophers, who, in this way, become unbelievers (cf. *supra* note 38). It is true that Avicenna supports this theory (cf. Leaman 2002 and Gardet 1951, pp. 71–85), but the fact that God does not know the particulars is a direct effect of his absolute Uniqueness and transcendence. God is too high and "different" from the creation and from the attributes of the contingent beings to be able to perceive, with his eternal and perfect knowledge, the minutiae of a reality infinitely far from Him.

In this regard, in the *Incoherence of the incoherence* (Averroes 1930, p. 339; tr. Averroes 1997, p. 334), Averroes assumes, as usual with him, a Solomonic position, which still displays a certain "orthodoxy": "God knows through a knowledge that is neither of the universals, nor of the particulars, a knowledge superior to the human one and incomprehensible to men. This means that, in connection with God, the term "knowledge" is not only incomprehensible, but even meaningless" (note of Van den Bergh, Averroes 1954, p. 203). Averroes properly says: "a knowledge of the structure and of the disposition of the world must exist by necessity that is simultaneously with the cause of this system, of the order and of the wisdom that exist in every living being; moreover, it is necessary for this intellect to be the harmony that is the cause of the perceivable harmony in existing beings. It appears impossible that this intellect knows the universals, let alone the particulars".

doubts after having formulated them exactly. Indeed, that who does not know how the knot was tangled, cannot loosen it either.

The doubt has its own necessary logic as follows: if the objects were present in God's mind—praise be upon Him!—before existing, would they exist in the divine knowledge (right) as they are before they are translated into existence, or in a way that is different from the one that they have in the divine knowledge before being translated into existence?[82] Now, we say: if they existed in a type of existence that is different from the one they have before being translated into existence, it would be necessary that eternal science was subject to change and that, passing from non-being to being, the objects determine (in God) an additional knowledge. But this is clearly absurd if divine knowledge is eternal.

And if we said: divine knowledge is equally unique in both ways of knowledge, it could be objected: are the objects—which are the existing brought into being—in themselves, before being created, identical to how they are when they exist? On this subject, it is necessary to answer no—that they are not in themselves, before being created, identical to how they are when they exist—otherwise being and non-being would turn out to be equivalent.

Let's assume that an opponent admitted this conclusion; we could ask him: is it perhaps not obvious that the true science is the knowledge of the existing as such? If he answered yes again, one could urge him: it is then necessary that, if the things differ in themselves one from the other, the knowledge that one has of them results equally different, because otherwise we would have a knowledge that does not correspond to the things as they are in reality. Therefore, only one solution is possible: or (eternal) science modifies itself or the objects that are brought into being are not known by it. Both of the conclusions, however, are unacceptable regarding God—praise be upon Him!

The difficulty is confirmed also by the situation of a man, whose knowledge of the non-existent is commensurate to a pre-

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[82] This means: Does God, after having created them, know the objects by the same kind of existence they have in his mind before existing, or, after they are created, does God know objects in a different way from how they were contained in his mind *ab initio*?

supposition of existence, while the knowledge of what exists is commensurate to existence itself. It is clear in itself, then, that the two ways of knowledge are different, because otherwise, in the exact moment something existed, it would be ignored.

It is not possible to avoid the dilemma with the usual answer that the *mutakallimūn* (theologians) offer, which is that the Most High would know the things before their existence exactly as they are in themselves in reality, in regards to the place, the time, and to any other specific characteristic of the existents. Indeed, it could be objected to theologians: When something is brought to existence, does it undergo or does it not undergo a modification in the moment in which it passes from non-being to being? If they answered no, they would say a huge absurdity. If they answered yes, one could continue tightening the objection to an inescapable conclusion: does eternal science perceive the change or not? It is indeed hard to hypothesise that the knowledge of something before its existence is identical to the knowledge of the same thing after it came to exist. Such is the most rigorously possible determination of the doubt in the subject, as we have already explained to you in a (previous) discussion.

And again: the solution of the problem would require a long argument, but we intend to dwell on and discuss only one crucial point. Abū Ḥāmid (al-Ḡazālī) in his book about the *Incoherence (of the Philosophers)* proposes a scarcely persuasive explanation of the difficulty,[83] drawing up an argument on the following tenor. He claims that the knowledge and the known are strictly related; and how it can happen that one of the terms of the dyad modifies itself without the other modifying itself, seems made explicit precisely by what happens in the relationship between God's science and the known things. For the known things change, while the knowledge that God has of them does not undergo any change. An example of this could be the following. Let's suppose that one same column is located first on the right and then on the left of Zayd: he does not change in himself. The example however is not valid. Indeed, the relationship (existing between Zayd and the column) has

[83] Al-Ḡazālī 1928, pp. 229–231 (XIII discussion). Cf. Averroes 1930, p. 459 (transl. Averroes 1997, pp. 428 ff.).

changed: from a position on the right side it has transformed to a position on the left side; what does not change is only the subject of the relationship, its bearer, that is Zayd. Being things like this, and identifying the knowledge with the relationship itself, it is necessary that the knowledge modifies itself with the transformation of the known object, in the same way as the position of the column has changed in relation to Zayd moving from the right side to the left one.[84]

From our point of view, the only way to solve the difficulty is to admit that the relationship between the divine eternal knowledge and what exists is different from the relationship between a derived knowledge and the existing itself. In the second case, indeed, knowledge is the effect of the existing things, while, on the other hand, eternal science is the cause and the determining reason of the existence of the things. If an increase of the eternal knowledge occurred in the moment when something comes to exist after not

[84] Averroes means that, even if the nature of Zayd (that is, out of metaphor, God) does not change when He perceives a column first on the right and then on the left, the column has changed though (that is, the contingent object perceived by God), it has modified its state in relation to the knowing subject. So, it is possible to avoid the conclusion that the knowledge that Zayd/God has of the column when it is located on his right is different from the knowledge He has when it is located on his left. However, in my view, Averroes' objection does not seem to confute al-Ḡazālī's example. Indeed, also the column does not change in itself and it does not modify its own substantial characteristics. Therefore, if it is two meters tall and it has a Corinthian capitol, it will remain two meters tall and with a Corinthian capitol both if it is located on Zayd's right and if it is located on his left (or behind and in front of him). This is, indeed, what al-Ḡazālī intended to prove, which is that the way of a thing to exist is identical—in connection to the knowledge which God has of it—before or after the creation: God's knowledge does not change, even if the thing changes or passes from not-being to being.

Probably, Averroes would have had more success if he had claimed that God's knowledge is instantaneous in the present and in the future, i. e. it is released from the temporal determining of things. In which case Zayd/God would know the column *simultaneously* while it is located on the right or on the left. This is, indeed, the "philosophical" answer that was given to al-Ḡazālī by Avicenna.

having been, analogously to how it happens for human knowledge, then it would also be necessary for eternal science to be the effect and not the cause of what exists. In it, therefore, there cannot occur any modification, as it instead happens to the derived knowledge (of man). The error is the result of the (undue) analogy that is drawn between eternal knowledge and human knowledge, namely between something that is concealed and something that is apparent: a comparison whose faultiness is well known. And as in the agent no change is determined in the moment in which its effect comes to exist, unless this change had not already happened before (the act), so in (God's) eternal science—praise be on Him!– no modification occurs in the moment in which the object known to it is produced.

The difficulty is therefore solved, and there is no necessity (to admit) that, since no change occurs in eternal science, (God) does not know the existing as such in the moment in which it comes to exist. Instead it results necessary that God does not know by a derived science, but by an eternal science. The determining of a change in the knowledge, while what exists is modified, is the condition of the fact that knowledge is the effect of what exists—and such is indeed the derived knowledge (proper of man).

Thus, divine eternal science is related to existing beings in a totally different way from human derived knowledge. But this does not mean at all that there do not exist (any) connection, which is instead the unfair accusation that is addressed to philosophers! They are blamed, in the framework of our problem, of claiming that God—praise be on Him!—does not know the particulars. But the matter is not in these terms, because philosophers simply claim that God does not know the particulars through a derived science, whose condition (of existence) is the coming to exist of the particulars themselves. Indeed, God's science is the cause of the particulars and not their effect, as it happens in the case of (human) derived science. This is one of the meanings of the "transcendence"[85] that necessarily is attributed to God.

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[85] Arabic: *haḍa huwa ġāyatu al-tanzīh alladī yağib an yuʿ tarafa bihi*. Butterworth translates: "This is the ultimate in removing imperfections [from God] that is obligatory to acknowledge". Hourani 1976, p. 75, translates

The demonstration concludes that God knows all things being the source of their (existence) through his knowledge of them; and actually, He knows them not only for the attribute of existence, but also for the attribute of knowledge. And this is consonant with the

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in an extremely twisted way: "This is the furthest extent to which purification (of concepts) ought to be admitted". The knot is in the meaning to be given to the word *tanzīh*, that, notoriously, in the Islamic theological language, indicates mainly the "transcendence" of God (Gardet-Anawati 1981, pp. 48, 56–57) and consequently the removal from His essence of all imperfections. In this context, God's loftiness justifies the total difference between his way of knowing and the one of man. Hourani's translation can be justified in the light of a passage of the *Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Averroes 1930, p. 227; tr. Averroes 1997, p. 248), where Averroes writes: "The meaning of the [philosophers'] words, that [the intellect] does not think the existents that are inferior to it, is that it does not think them in the same way that we [men] think them, but in a way that is not comparable to the one of any other thinking being. Indeed, if another existent could think [the existents] in the way in which the intellect thinks them, it would participate in God's knowledge, and God is too high for all of this. This [the capability of knowing the things in a different way from the human one] is one of God's peculiar qualities, and for this reason some theologians affirm that God, besides the seven attributes that belong to Him, owns another one that is peculiar to Him". It is necessary, with regards to this passage, to read the note of Averroes' translator 1954, S. Van den Bergh (section "Notes", p. 88): "Averroes refers here to the theory originally formulated by the Muʿtazilite Abū Hāšim… that God possesses a positive quality that characterises him, his being God, his Divinity (*ilahiya*). Other theologians (such as Rāzī) deny this assumption and apply to God the method of negation, or *tanzīh* (literally "removal", but the word is the exact translation of the Greek term *afàiresis)*, which means that they assert that God must be described negatively". Now, leaving aside the complex issue of "negative" or apophatic theology in the *mutakallimūn*, which is the (widely shared, also in the West, by many thinkers including Augustine) principle that about God one can only say *what He is not*, it is likely that Hourani, translating the Arabic sentence that we are discussing, interpreted *tanzīh* as meaning *afàiresis*. This last term is used by Aristotle to indicate the *abstraction*, which justifies the conversion of *tanzīh* as "purification of concepts". If the hypothesis is correct, we might conclude that Hourani gives *tanzīh* a prevailing "philosophical" nuance, while I have preferred a "theological" nuance.

words of the Most High: "How could not He, who created everything, know his own creation, He who is the Subtle one, of everything informed?" (Q. 67:14). The demonstration concludes also that God does not know things through a kind of derived science; therefore, it is necessary that, of the existing beings, a knowledge exists whose modalities are not known,[86] and such is the eternal science (of God)—praise be upon Him!

How is it then possible for one to imagine that the peripatetic philosophers would deny that eternal science embraces the particulars? Instead, they think that God induces precognitive anticipations in dreams and inspires the revelation and other kinds of advices!

This is what appears evident to us in the solution of the doubt (proposed at the beginning), so that the matter results completely indisputable and without any difficulty. God is He who without fail leads to reason and guides to truth. May God's peace, mercy, and blessing be with you!

[86] Verb *kayyafa*. It is the ancient theological Islamic problem of the *bilā kayfa*, particularly supported by the Aš'arites: God has real attributes (wisdom, life, mightiness, hearing, sight, etc.), but we do not know "how" they are or how they work and relate to the divine essence (cf. Caspar 1987, pp. 179 ff. and 209; Gardet-Anawati 1981, pp. 57–58, 66, 216…).